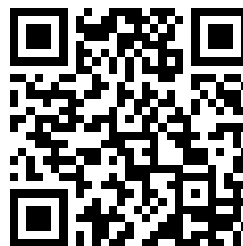
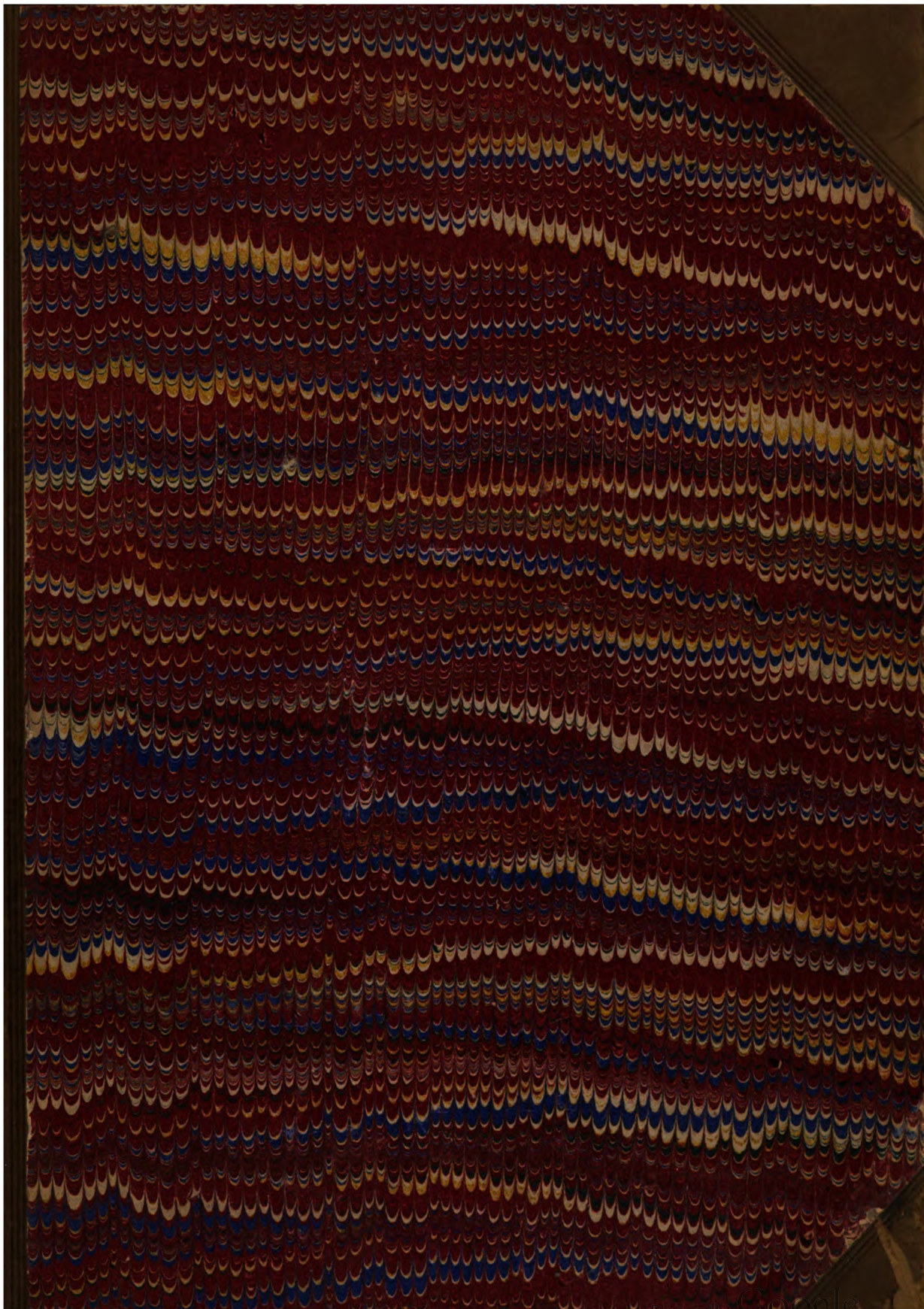

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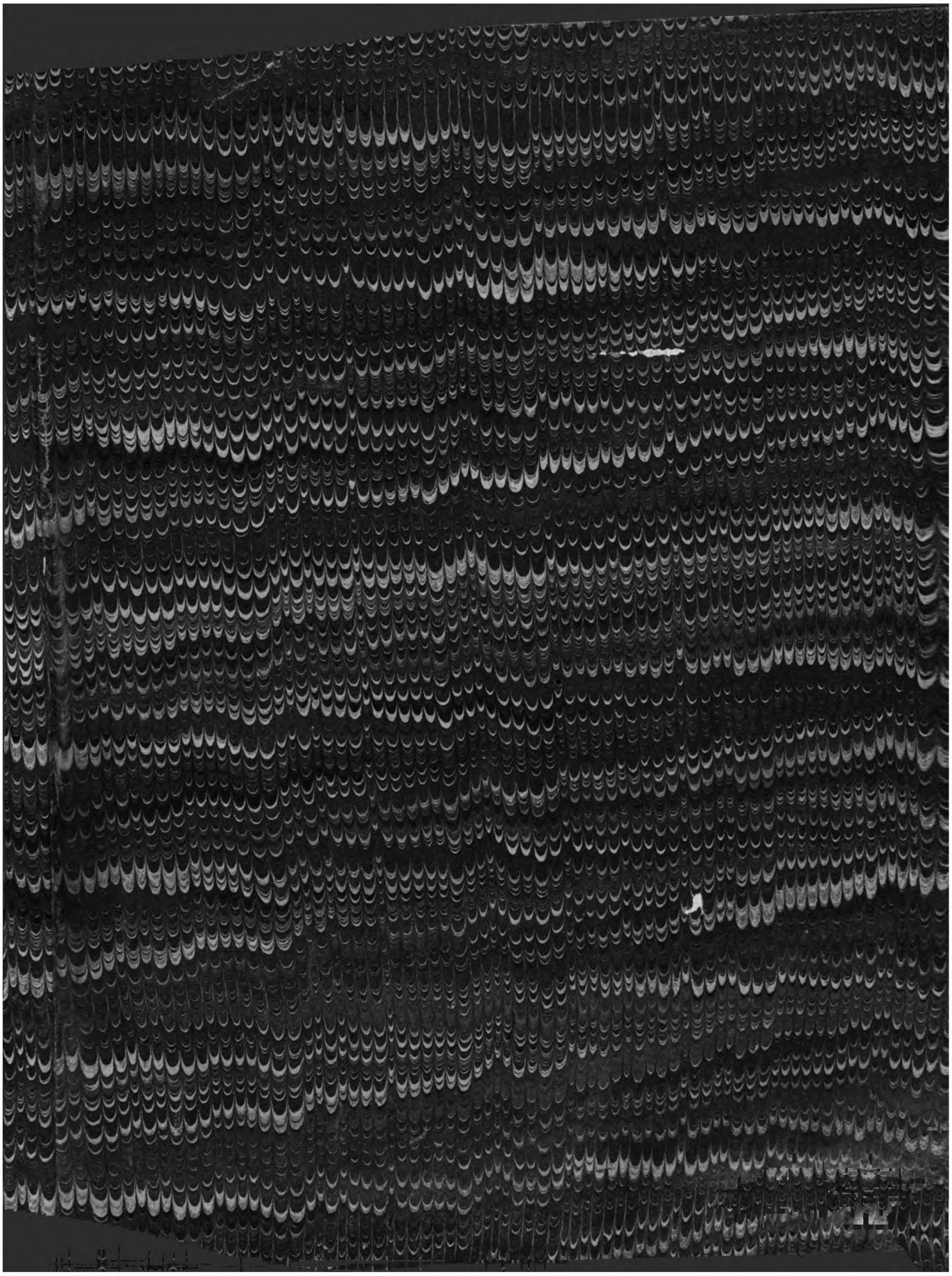
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NOVELETTES IN THIS VOLUME—

FAR WEST.

A BLACK STORY.

A DOG LOST.

ST. RUNWALD'S.



Far West:
A TALE OF A TREASURE.

PROLOGUE.

THE TEMPLE OF THE SUN IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.



HIGH amongst the mountain peaks.

At daybreak in the Incas' land on the far western shores, known to our fathers as the great wonderland—the great country discovered by adventurous mariners, and thought of, dreamed of, seen through a golden mist raised by the imagination—a mist which gave to everything its own peculiar hue; and hence the far-off land was whispered of as the El Dorado: the gilded—the Golden Americas, and the country whose rivers ran over golden

sand—whose rocks were veined with the coveted ore, and nations vied with each other in seeking to humble the haughty Spaniard whose enterprise had gained him the strongest footing in the coveted region.

Daybreak at Tehutlan, the Incas' city, in the year 1533, and the peaks of the mighty mountains, that appeared to pierce the bright blue sky, seeming to bear out the fabulous belief of the Eastern lands, for their icy summits glowed, and flushed, and sparkled in the rays of the sun, which gilded every pinnacle, and turned each glacier into a river of gold, seeming to flow slowly downwards towards the vales and plains of the Andes, as yet flooded with darkness.

But soon the purple flood of darkness began to give place to golden light, as still streaming down, as it were, from the mountain tops, the sunshine in bright cataracts leaped from point to point, rushing up this dark gully, that vast fissure, turning gloom into glowing landscape, and at last filling the vast vales with gladness and life, as the glowing picture burst into full beauty.

Here, at the foot of the mountains, flowed the mighty rivers of South America, bordered by the vast, eternal tropic forest, with its dank, steaming moisture, the home of the fierce beast, the loathsome reptile, and insect plagues innumerable. Far up the mountains was the land of ice and snow, fierce, biting wind, and sleety tempest, with here and there patches of verdure, the pastoral land of the

vicuna and llama flocks; but in the intermediate space, balanced, as it were, between the tropical heat and the wintry frosts, on the table lands, half way up the mountains, was the stronghold of the Peruvian civilization. So near to the equator that intolerable heat might have been expected—an expectation, though, not fulfilled, for the elevation gave to the Peruvians a glorious climate, with all the brightness but none of the enervation of equatorial land.

Cottage, house, and palace, of no mean construction, were scattered here and there, the homes of peasant and Peruvian noble. But it was upon the temple crowning a near elevation that the eye would rest, in rapt astonishment at its magnificence and grandeur. The description may sound like a page from some Eastern fable; but none the less it is a fact culled from the pages of history.

For as that bright morning sun peered at length above the shoulder of an eastern hill, it was to shine full upon the Temple of the Sun and its glorious gardens.

Gold—gold everywhere—gold and precious stones; facing the great entrance and ready to receive its first rays was a golden representation of the sun itself—a vast golden face surrounded by rays stretching out in every direction—vast, massive, and glowing effulgently, reflecting back the sun's rays, and lighting the interior of the gold-decked temple.

For there was no paltry gilding here, but massive golden cornice, frieze, plate, stud, and boss ornamenting the massive walls glistening, sparkling, and flashing back the sun's light, while, as if these were not sufficient, emeralds and other precious stones were lavishly spread in further ornamentation, adding their lustrous sheen to the warm glow already diffused through the magnificent building. Flash, sparkle—glistening streams of golden light, dancing like golden water upon the gorgeous walls, gilding even those who entered, so that face and garments were bathed and dyed in the glorious radiance, till the eye of the beholder ached, and the darkened intellects of the simple Peruvians might well believe that they were in the presence of their sun-god himself.

But not only was gold lavished upon the stone building, even to adorning its outer walls with a broad belt of the precious metal—solid, massive, and magnificently wrought—but the implements and vessels of the temple were of the yellow treasure. Huge vases stood upon the floor filled with the produce of their land—offerings to the sun; perfume censers, water cruses, cistern pipes, reservoirs—all were of the rich, ruddy metal.

The Peruvians called the ore in their language of imagery "the tears wept by the sun," and these tears they toiled to gather, and their artificers worked them up with a wondrous skill under the direction of the priests; and, as if to complete the wonders of the temple, and to give it adornments that should never lose their lustre—never fade—it was surrounded by an Aladdin-like garden whose plants were gold—golden of leaf, silver of stem, and with flowers sparkling in combinations of the two metals. Fountains of gold cast up golden water, to fall back in golden basins—a mimic spray; and even then fresh objects

of the goldsmith's skill were seen in the golden-fleeced llamas grouped around.

But the glory of the Incas was passing. After a long period of prosperity the evil days were at hand—the wondrous barbaric civilization was about to be swept away; for the adventurous Spaniard, moved by his thirst for the gold of whose existence rumour had from time to time told him, was now in the land. The simple people coasting along in their light balzas or rafts had seen the coming of what to them were then wondrous ships—cock-boats, though, as compared even to our collier brigs. War and rapine were in the land; the arms of the Spaniards—the thunder and lightning they bore with them in their guns—were everywhere victorious, and the riches of the temples were seized; gloriously-wrought vessels were hastily molten down into ingots, along with plate, shield, and wonderfully-worked flowers; rapacity was triumphant, and upon one occasion the value of the treasure collected and melted down into bars was computed at three millions and a half pounds sterling of our money.

But the temples and their adornments were many, and held sacred by the people—a sanctity they had ventured to hope would be observed by the conquerors; but the delusion was of short duration. The coming of a body of Spaniards was the signal for the stripping of each gorgeous building. Sacred vessel and ornament were seized upon and borne off, but the news was spread from temple to temple, from priest to priest, through the length and breadth of the land, by means of swift-footed couriers, not by written letter, neither by word of mouth, but by means of a fringe of cords tied in knots, each knot and its place having its particular signification.

The alarm spread, and the day of evil being upon them—their sun-gods giving no sign of crushing the profane intruders—the priests looked upon it as a sign of wrath and punishment; and sooner than their treasure should fall into the hands of the fierce, remorseless conquerors, eagerly stripped their temples themselves, and in remote hiding-places, with many a mysterious rite, re-committed the gold to its parent earth, binding all who beheld by the most fearful bonds never to reveal the treasure places to the conquerors, but to wait for the great day when the ancient glory of Peru should be revived, when the Incas should reign once more, and their religion flourish ere the sacred treasures were disinterred.

But that day came not. European civilization began to take the place of that of the Incas, a new form of religion flourished, and from being monarchs in the country the Peruvians became the slaves, the hewers of wood and drawers of water of a new race. Generations came, and generations died out, and the years still rolled on till ages passed away; but though poor and degraded, the priestly caste existed still amongst the Indians, and from father to son was the great secret handed down in village after village, the idea of appropriating to their own use the buried treasures never once being dreamed of; but with the wealth of princes' ransoms scattered here and there throughout the country, the Indians watched over them still, and handed down the secret to their children.

Some were discovered by stratagem, others by treachery—others, again, by accident; and while the exact bearings of the places were mostly well remembered, others died out of the memory of those to whose trust they were committed, or in some cases died with them. But to this day it is believed that vast stores of the precious metal still lie waiting the hand of the discoverer, the barbaric relics of a fierce and bloody religion—the creed of an idolatrous people; and many an explorer unrewarded has wasted his days amidst the traces of the ruined temples, and tokens of a grand civilization scattered here and there amidst the forests and mountain fastnesses of the mighty Andes.

CHAPTER I.—AFTER THREE AGES.

PERHAPS it was with reading "Robinson Crusoe" and "Sindbad the Sailor:" I don't know, but I always did have a hankering after going abroad. Twopence was generally the extent of my supply of hard cash, so I used to get dreaming about gold, and to think that I had only to get wrecked upon some rocky shore to find the remains of a Spanish galleon freighted with gold in doubloons, and bars, and ingots—a prize to which I could lay claim and be rich for ever after.

Now, with such ideas as these in my head, I ask anybody, was it likely that I could take to soap-boiling?

That was my father's business, and he was very proud of his best and second quality yellow, and his prime hard mottled. He had made a comfortable living out of it, as his father and grandfather had before him, helping to cleanse no end of people in their time; but I thought then, as I think now, that it was a nasty, unpleasant business, whose stink is in my nostrils to the present day.

"You're no good, Harry," says my father—"not a bit; and unless you sink that tin-pot pride of yours, and leave off wandering about and wearing out your boots, and take off your coat and go to work, you'll never get a living. You've always got your nose stuck in a book—such trash! Do you ever see me over a book, unless it's a day-book or ledger, eh?"

My father had no sooner done speaking than my mother shook her head at me; so I lit my pipe to keep the smell of the tallow out of my nose, and went and stood out in the yard, leaning my back up against one of the great hogsheads, and thought.

It only took me five minutes to make up my mind, for the simple reason that it was already seven-eighths on the way, this not being the first time by many a score that my father had given me his opinion respecting my future prospects in life; and after twenty-one, such opinions used to seem to grit in amongst my mental works; while the longer I lived the more I thought that I should never get my livelihood by soap-boiling.

Well, my mind was made up most stubbornly that I would go out to Uncle John.

Just then, as I stood moodily there, I heard the sound of a scuffle and a sharp smack, and directly after, one of our men, a young fellow of my own age—Tom Bulk, by name—came hurriedly out of the kitchen door, rubbing one side of his red face, but

only to drop his hand the moment he caught sight of me leaning against the tallow-tub.

"What's the matter, Tom?" I said, though I knew well enough that Tom was in hot water, and sore troubled in his mind about sundry attentions paid by the baker to our rosy-faced cook, whom Tom was rather fond of upbraiding therewith.

"Got a flea in my ear, Mas'r Harry," he said, with a grin of vexation.

"So have I, Tom," I said, bitterly; "but I caught mine in the parlour."

"Mas'r been rowing you agen, sir?"

"Yes, Tom," I said, drearily; "and it's for the last time. If I'm no good, I may as well be off. I can't take to our business."

"Well, 'tain't so sweet as it used to be, sir; and it don't seem right that, to make other folks clean, we should allers be in a greasy muck. But what are you going to do, Mas'r Harry?" he said, anxiously.

"Going abroad, Tom."

"So am I, Mas'r Harry."

"You, Tom?"

"Sure I am, Mas'r Harry, if you are," said Tom; and then and there he pulled off his great, greasy leather apron and soapy white slop, and fetched his steamy jacket out of the boiling-house. "I'm ready, Mas'r Harry," he exclaimed, when he had only one arm in his sleeve.

And, as a matter of course, I burst out laughing. But I soon turned as serious as was Tom Bulk, and, to make a long matter short, before a month had elapsed, Tom and I were at Liverpool, ready to embark for Caracas.

CHAPTER II.

OURS was a long, dreary, uneventful voyage before we were in the bright blue tropic waters, gazing wonderingly at the strange sights and sounds, when we put in at some island port; basking indolently in the glorious, unclouded sunshine, and contrasting all we saw with dull, cheerless, hazy home in the winter season.

We dropped anchor, at last, at La Guayra, whose open roadstead made our vessel to roll heavily, as the great swell came softly sweeping in, making the tall masts to act as levers, swaying the ship's hull, now this way now that, till her bright copper, heavily laden as she was, glistened in the sun.

It was a bright picture spread before us, and I began to wonder how it was that, with such lovely places upon the face of the earth, people could be content to live in old England. There, seen through the bright, transparent atmosphere, were convent, cathedral, castle, and tower, grouped at the foot of a mountain, glistening with endless tints as it towered up nine thousand feet, wall and battlement running up the spurs of the great eminence.

The scene was lovely, and I was in raptures then with all that lay before me; and again I asked myself how people could be content in chilly Europe; but I soon knew.

Tom was by my side, and, turning to him—

"What do you think of it, Tom?" I said.

"Well, 'tain't so very bad, Mas'r Harry," he grumbled out. "But aint them sharkses?"

I followed his pointing finger, and, to my horror, I could see, cleaving the blue and creamy-foamed water, close in shore, the back fins of one—two—three—half a score of sharks; while all the time, dashing and splashing in and out of the surf, busily unloading boats and larger vessels, were dozens of Mulatto porters.

I expected every moment to hear a shriek, and to see the silver foam tinged with red. My heart beat intermittently, and there was a strange dampness in my hands; but I soon learned that familiarity bred contempt, and that, probably from the noise and splashing kept up, the sharks rarely ventured an attack. But, all the same, that one incident made me gaze down into the blue depths where we were at anchor with a shudder, and think that the waters were not so safe as those of home.

I had yet to learn something of the land.

"What's this place called?" said Tom, interrupting my reverie. "You did tell me, but I've forgotten."

"La Guayra!"

"Humph!" ejaculated Tom. "Why can't they call places by some name in plain English?"

But the various strange sights and sounds soon silenced Tom's tongue, and, tired out at last with a long walk, we went to the house that had been recommended to me; and after partaking of coffee—the best I ever remember to have drunk—I sought my room, Tom insisting upon sleeping on the floor in the same chamber; and my last waking recollections were of the pungent fumes of tobacco and the tinkle-tinkle twang of a guitar beneath my window.

I must have been asleep about three hours, and I was dreaming of having found gold enough to load a vessel homeward bound, when I was awakened by some one shaking me violently, and as I started up I became aware of a deafening noise, a choking sensation, as of dust rising in a cloud, and the voice of Tom Bulk.

"Mas'r Harry—Mas'r Harry! Wacken up, will you?"

"What's the matter?" I gasped, springing out of bed, but only to reel and stagger about before falling heavily.

"That's just how it served me," said Tom. "Kneel down, Mas'r Harry, same as I do. The house is as drunk as a fiddler, and the floor's going just like the deck of a ship."

"Where are you?" I cried, trying to collect my scattered faculties, for, awakened so suddenly from a deep sleep, I was terribly confused.

"Ob, I'm here!" said Tom. "Give 's your hand here; but, I say, Mas'r Harry, what's it mean? Do all the houses get dancing like this here every night, because, if so, I'll sleep in the fields. There it goes again! Soap and soda! what a row!"

Tom might well exclaim, for with the house rocking frightfully, now came from outside the peal as of a thousand thunders, accompanied by the clang of bells, the crash of falling walls, the sharp cracking and splitting of woodwork, and the yelling and shrieking of people running to and fro.

"So this 'ere's a native storm, Mas'r Harry?" shouted Tom to me, during a pause.

"No!" I shouted, in answer, as with a shiver

of dread I worded the fearful suspicion that had flashed across my brain. "No, Tom, it's an earthquake!"

"Is that all?" grumbled Tom. "Well, it might have come in the daytime, and not when folks were tired. But I thought earthquakes swallowed you up."

"Here, for Heaven's sake help me at this door, Tom!" I shouted, "or we shall be crushed to death. Here, push—hard!"

But our efforts were vain; for just then came another shock, and one side of the room split open from floor to ceiling.

"The window—the window, Tom!" I shrieked.

And, thoroughly roused to our danger, we both made for the casement, reaching it just as, with a noise like thunder, down went the whole building, when it seemed to me that I had been struck a violent blow, and the next instant I was struggling amongst broken wood, dust, and plaster, fighting fiercely to escape; for there was a horrible dread upon me that at the next throes of the earthquake we should be buried alive far down in the bowels of the earth.

I was at liberty, though, the next minute.

"Tom—Tom!" I shouted, feeling about, for the darkness was fearful. "Where are you?"

"All right, sir," was the reply—"close beside you."

"Here, give me your hand," I shouted, "and let's run down to the shore."

For in my horror that was the first place that occurred to me.

"Can't, sir," said Tom. "I aint got no legs. Can't feel 'em about there anywheres, can you?"

"What do you mean?" I cried. "This is no time for fooling! Look sharp, or we shall lose our lives."

"Well, so I am looking sharp," growled Tom. "Aint I looking for my legs? I can't feel 'em no-wheres. Oh, here they are, Mas'r Harry—here they are."

By this time I had crawled to him, over the ruins of the house, to find that he was jammed in amongst the rubbish, which rose to his knees; and, as he told me afterwards, the shock had produced a horrible sensation, just as if his legs had been taken off—a sensation heightened by the fact that he could feel down to his knees and no farther.

"This is a pleasant spot to take a house on lease, Mas'r Harry," he said, as I tore at the woodwork.

"Are you hurt?" I exclaimed, hastily.

"Not as I knows on, Mas'r Harry, only my legs aint got no feeling in 'em. Stop a minute, I think I can get that one out now."

We worked so hard, that at the end of a few minutes Tom was at liberty, and after chafing his legs a little he was able to stand; but meanwhile the horrors around were increasing every instant, and, to my excited fancy, it seemed as if the earth was like some thick piece of carpet, which was being made to undulate and pass in waves from side to side.

Dust everywhere—choking, palpable dust; and then, as from afar off, came a faint roar, increasing each moment, till, with a furious rush, a fierce wind came tearing through the ruins of the smitten town, sweeping all before it, so that we had to cower down

and seek protection from the storm of earth, sand, dust, plaster, and fragments hurled against us by the hurricane.

But the rush of wind was as brief as it was fierce, and it passed away; when, in the lull that followed, came shrieks and moans from all directions, and the sounds of hurrying, stumbling feet, and then, all at once, from out of the thick darkness, a voice cried—

"Quick—quick! To the mountain—the sea is coming in!"

Then came more wails and shrieks from out of the darkness, followed by a silence that was more awful than the noise.

For full five minutes that silence lasted, broken only by the fall of some tottering beam. Then came quickly, one after the other, short, sharp, shivering vibrations of the earth beneath our feet—a shuddering movement that was transferred to one's own frame; and then I began to understand the meaning of the cry we had heard respecting the sea, for from where I supposed it to be, now came a singular hissing, rushing noise, gradually increasing to a roar, as of mighty waves, and mingled with that roar there was the creaking and grinding together of shipping and the hoarse shouting of the crews for help.

But gradually the noises ceased, save when a shuddering shock once more made the earth to tremble beneath our feet, and some scrap of wood or plaster to fall from riven wall or roof. The tremendous choking dust, too, began to settle down as we groped our way along over the ruins that choked the streets. Now we were lost—now, after a struggle, we regained the way, trying to join one of the hurrying bands of fugitives hastening from the place.

I spoke to one man, asking him if there was any more danger, but his reply was in Spanish; and at last, led by Tom—who seemed by instinct to know his way—we went down to the shore strewn with wreck, when, seizing a rope, and drawing a boat to the sand, Tom told me to enter, and we half lay there, rising and falling upon the wave—rocked gently, but wakeful ever, till the sun rose over the sea—bright, glorious, and peaceful, as if there had been no havoc and desolation during the night.

CHAPTER III.

"**S**AY, Mas'r Harry, you won't stop in this blessed place, will you?" said Tom, as, in the full light of day, we were some hours after busily helping in the town, extricating the dead and wounded, and assisting to bear them to the temporary hospital prepared for their reception.

The house where we had slept was, like hundreds more of the light-built tenements, prostrate; and on visiting the scene our escape seemed wonderful, while everywhere the mischief done was appalling: houses toppled down, streets choked with ruins, towers split from top to bottom, and stones hurled from the unroofed buildings into the gaping cracks and fissures running down the streets.

But now that the first fright was over, people seemed to take the matter very coolly, flocking back into the town, to sit and smoke and eat fruit amidst

the ruins of their homes, while others quietly set to work to restore and repair damages.

"Has there ever been an earthquake here before?" I said to a merchant who spoke English.

"Earthquakes, my dear senor? Yes; they are common things here."

"But will the inhabitants rebuild the town?"

"Surely. Why not? The site is charming."

I had my own thoughts upon the subject, but I did not express them; so, too, had Tom, but he did express his as above.

"Say, Mas'r Harry, you won't stop here, will you?"

"No," I said; "we are going up the country."

"Because this place aint safe—there's a screw loose underground somewheres. Not that I mind. Earthquakes aint so much account, after all, if they'd come in the day; but, all the same, I wouldn't stop here."

I had had no intention of stopping, only just long enough to see the place and make arrangements for the prosecution of my journey; but this catastrophe hurried my departure, and at the end of three days we were both mounted on mules, travelling over hot, bare plains, with the sun pouring down until one's brain seemed scorched; and when at last water was reached, it was thick and muddy-looking, so that, but for our horrible thirst, we could not have touched it.

My ideas of South America had been undergoing a great change during the past few days; and, quite disappointed, in the midst of a long, burning ride, I made some remark to Tom about the heat.

"Hot, Mas'r Harry!" he said. "Pooh! this ain't hot! 'Tis a little warmer than the other place, because there is no sea breeze, but I could stand a deal more than this. These here—will you be quiet, then?—these here mules is the worst of it, though, sir. They won't go like a horse, nor yet like a donkey; and as to kicking—"

Tom stopped short, for he wanted his breath for other purposes, his steed having once more turned refractory, kicking, rearing, shaking itself in an effort to dislodge its rider, spinning round and round, laying its long ears flat upon its neck, tucking its tail close in between its legs, and then squeaking and squealing in the most outrageous manner imaginable.

I have no doubt that it was most terribly unpleasant to the rider—painful, probably; but to a looker-on it was one of the most ludicrous of sights, and in spite of heat, weariness, and a tendency to low spirits, I laughed till the tears ran down my cheeks, while Tom grinned with pain, and held on with both hands to the refractory beast.

"Ah! Would you!" cried Tom, as the brute lifted its heels higher than usual, nearly sending him over its head. "There never was such a beast as this here, Mas'r Harry. If I'd only got a thicker stick!"

One could not pity him much; for at starting he had rejected three or four quiet-looking beasts as too slow, and chosen the animal he rode—or rather tried to ride—for, if the reader will pardon the Irishism, a great deal of Tom's riding was walking, and performed by leading his beast by its bridle.

But really it was a deceptive beast; and to have

seen it drooping its head, and walking calmly and peacefully by its hirer's side, no one would have imagined that it possessed so much mischievous sagacity as it very soon displayed when any one attempted to mount it.

"I like 'em with some sperrit in 'em, Mas'r Harry," Tom had said. "If it was a horse it would be different; but if one's to ride a donkey, let's have one with something in it."

And verily Tom's donkey, as he called it, was not very long before it showed that it had, indeed, something in it—a great deal more, in fact, than Tom had bargained for. We did not pass many trees by the track, but when we did come upon one, Tom had certain information thereof, for the mule rubbed his rider's leg vigorously against the trunk. The sight of a muddy pool of water was the signal for him to squeak, elevate his heels, and then go off at a sharp gallop, when if his rider did not quickly slip off behind, he would be carried into the pool and bathed; for the mule would drink his fill, and then indulge in a roll in the mud and water. In short, I never before saw so many acts of cunning in an animal, one and all directed at dislodging the rider.

At first I was in a state of tremor lest his vagaries should infect the beasts ridden by myself and the guide; but no, they were evidently elderly mules—bordering on a hundred, they might have been, from their grey and mangy aspect. They had sown their wild oats years before, and all that they did was to trudge solemnly on, quiet and sure-footed, if not swift.

Tom's mishaps had their pleasant face, though; they served to make a horribly monotonous journey more bearable, and on an average he was in grief, some way or another, about every two hours.

"Oh, senor," said the guide, proudly, "the mule is perfect. He is a magnificent beast, but he has his antipathies. He used to be ridden by the padre, and he is a most holy and Christian mule. He shows his dislike a little sometimes like that, because the senor who rides him is a heretic."

"Oh!" I said.

"Yes, it is so, senor, I assure you," said the guide. "Let your friend ride my beast, and I will take his, and then you will see how peaceable he is."

At first, Tom did not seem disposed to agree, for he did not like being beaten; but I ordered him to dismount, his accidents tending so greatly to lengthen our journey. So the exchange of mules was made, and on we went once more.

"See, senor!" said the guide. "He is a pattern mule, is Juan; he goes like a lamb. It is a natural dislike that he has not learned to subdue. He does not know what good men and generous there are amongst the heretics."

"Haw, haw, haw! Look at that, Mas'r Harry—there's a game!" roared Tom, for the guide had hardly done speaking, just as we were travelling pleasantly along, before Juan, the mule, stopped short, put his head between his legs, elevated his hind-quarters, and the next moment the guide was sitting amongst the stones, staring up at us with a most comical expression of countenance.

"The beast has been cursed!" he said, angrily, as

he rose. "Car-r-r-r-r-r-r-r—ambo! but you shall starve for this, Juan!"

"Let me have another turn at him," cried Tom, as he started off to catch the mule, which had started a few hundred yards, and was searching



about with his nose amongst the sand and stones for a few succulent blades of grass, where there was not so much as a thistle or a cactus to be seen.

But Juan had no wish to be caught, and after leading his pursuer a tolerable race, he stopped short, and placed all four hoofs together, so as to turn easily as upon a pivot, presenting always his tail to the hand that caught at his bridle.

"Poor fellow, then! Come then—come over," said Tom, soothingly.

But the only response he obtained was an occasional lift of the beast's heels, and an angry kick.

"You ignorant brute, you can't understand plain English!" cried Tom, angrily.

"No, senor, he is a true Spanish mule," said the guide, coming up.

And between them, Tom and he managed to catch Juan, when, holding tightly by the reins, the guide vented his displeasure and took his revenge by thoroughly drumming the poor brute's ribs with a stout stick, after which Tom mounted, and our journey for the next two hours was without incident.

But we were not to get to the end of the day without mishap. The sun had begun to descend, and we were panting along, longing for the sight of water to quench our burning throats, when Juan began to show that the pain from the guide's drubbing had evaporated. First of all he indulged in a squeal or two; then he contrived to kick the mule I rode upon one of its legs, when, emboldened by the success of the manoeuvre, he waited his time, and then sidling up to his companion ridden by the guide, he discharged a fierce kick at him, nearly catching the guide in the shin; but the result was a tremendous crack from a stick right upon Juan's back—a blow which made him shake his head with dissatisfaction till his ears rattled again.

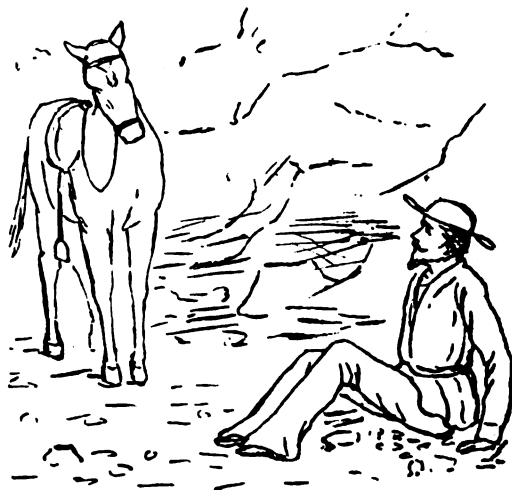
He had forgotten the pain, though, in ten minutes, and the first hint we had thereof was a squeal, and feat of sleight of *heel*, in which, to all appearances, Juan stood perpendicularly upon his nose and forefeet for half a minute, like a fleshly tripod, while his rider, or rather his late rider, rolled over and over, the centre of a cloud of impalpable dust, coughing and sneezing, and muttering fiercely.

"There!" exclaimed Tom, as he jumped up and began beating the dust from his garments. "That's four times that brute has had me off to-day. I've rid everything in my time, Mas'r Harry, from a pig up to a parish bull. I've been on sheep and donkeys, and when I was at the blacksmith's I rode all sorts of restive beasts as came to be shod; but I never did get on such a beast as that: his skin don't fit him, and he slippers about between your legs all sorts of ways; but I mean to ride him yet. But just you try him half an hour, Mas'r Harry, just to see what he's like."

"Not I, thank you, Tom," was my reply. "I'm very well content."

"So am I, Mas'r Harry, only he makes me so sore; but I ain't bet yet, I can tell him! Come over, then!"

But the mule would not "come over, then!" and there ensued a fierce fight of kicks between Tom and his steed, Tom essaying to kick the mule for punishment in the ribs; the mule, nowise taken aback, returning the compliment, by essaying to kick his late rider anywhere, though without success. It might have been imagined, to see the artful feints and moves, that the mule was endowed with human reason. Tom was more than a match for him at last, though, for, slipping off his jacket, he threw it over the mule's head and held it there, confusing the poor beast so, that it could not avoid a couple of heartily given kicks in the ribs, and



before it could recover from its surprise Tom was once more seated upon its back in triumph.

"I can stand a wonderful sight of kicking off, Mas'r Harry, I can tell you! I ain't bet yet! Co-o-me on, will you!"

Apparently cowed now that the jacket was removed, the mule journeyed on very peaceably, till, leaving the plain, we began to ascend a precipitous mountain side, the track each moment growing more and more sterile—if it were possible—grand, and at



the same time dangerous. And now it was that we began to see the qualities of the mules in the cautious way they picked their steps, feeling each loose piece of path before trusting their weight to it, and doing much towards removing a strange sensation of tremor, evoked by the fact that we were progressing along a shelf of rugged rock, some two feet wide—the scarped mountain side upon our right, a vast precipice on the left.

More than once I was for getting down to walk, but the guide dissuaded me, as he declared that it was far better to trust to the mules, who were never known to slip.

A couple of miles of such travelling served to somewhat reassure me—familiarity with danger breeding contempt; and I called out to Tom—

“I hope your beast won’t bear malice, Tom; for this would be an awkward place for him to try his capers.”

I said so thoughtlessly, just at a time when we were descending, Tom’s beast, which was before me, walking along with the most rigorous care as to where he set his feet.

“Oh! I say, don’t, Mas’r Harry,” whined Tom—“don’t! It’s no joke, you know, and this mule understands every word you say—leastwise he might, you know. I aint afraid, only he might—”

Tom’s sentence was not finished; for, in fact, just as if every word I had uttered had been comprehended, down went the beast’s head, his heels were elevated, and the next moment, to my horror, poor Tom was over the side of the path, and rolling swiftly down to apparent destruction.

He was brought up, though, the next moment by the reins, which he tightly grasped, and which fortunately did not give way, though they tightened with a jerk that must have nearly dislocated the

mule’s neck. The leather, fortunately, now strained and stretched, but held firm, while, planting its fore feet close to the edge of the precipice, and throwing its body back against the scarped wall, it stood firm as the rock itself, but snorting loudly, as, with glaring eyeballs, it stared down at Tom, who hung there, trying to obtain some rest for his feet, but uttering no sound, only gazing up at us with a wild look that said, plainly as could be, “Don’t leave me here to die!”

It was no easy task to help him; for the guide and I had both to dismount on to a narrow ledge of rock, clinging the while to our mules; but we achieved that part of our task, and the next moment, one on either side of Juan, we were kneeling down, and trying to reach Tom’s hands.

But our efforts were vain, for the mule was in the way, and there was not standing room for all three. There was but one way of helping, and that looked too desperate to be attempted, and I hesitated to propose it as I knelt shivering there.

The same thought, though, had occurred to Tom, and in a husky voice he said—

“Take hold of the guide’s hand, Mas’r Harry, and creep under the mule’s legs to his side.”

It was no time to hesitate; and I did so, the mule giving utterance to quite a shriek as I passed.

“Now can you both reach the bridle?” Tom whispered.

“Yes, yes!” we both exclaimed.

“Hold on tight, then, while one of you cuts it through, and then the mule will be out of the way.”

We each took a good grip of the leathern thong, raising it so that we had Tom’s full weight upon our muscles; and then, crouching down so as not to be drawn over, I hastily drew out my knife, opened it



with some difficulty by means of my teeth, and then tried to cut the bridle above our hands.

But feeling himself partly relieved of his burden, the mule began to grow restless, stamping, whinnying, and trying to get free. For a moment I thought

we might utilize his power, and make him back and help draw Tom up; but the narrowness of the ledge forbade it, and he would only have been drawn sideways till the rein broke.

Twice I tried to cut the bridle, but twice the mule balked me, and I was glad to ease the fearful strain on one arm by catching at the hand that held the knife.

"Try again, Mas'r Harry, please," whispered Tom. "I can't hang much longer."

With a desperate effort I cut at the rein, and divided it close to the mule's mouth.

He started back a few inches, tightening the other rein; but now, once more, I was grasping the rein with both hands lest it should slip through my fingers, and at the same moment the knife fell, striking Tom on the cheek and making the blood spurt out, before flying down—down to a depth that was horrible to contemplate.

It was a fearful time, and as I crouched down there a cold sensation seemed to be creeping through the marrow of all my bones. We could not raise Tom for the mule, I could not cut the rein, and upon asking I found that the guide had no knife, and, what was worse, it was evident that he was losing nerve.

I dared not try to heave—it would have been madness, cumbered and crowded together as we were; and in those brief moments of agony it seemed to me that I was Tom's murderer, for, but on account of my wild thirst for coming abroad, he might have been safe at home.

"Try—try again, Mas'r Harry, please," whispered the poor fellow, imploringly; "I shouldn't like to die out here in these savage parts, nor yet this how. Make one more try to get rid of that beast."

As if to show that he was not all bad, just at the moment when it seemed that all chance of saving poor Tom was gone—when our arms seemed to be dragging out of their sockets, and a something drawing me by a strange fascination, joined to the weight, over the side of the precipice's side—the mule gave a wild squeal, shook its head for an instant, seized the tight rein in its teeth, and bit it through.

The next moment it gave a whinny of relief, planted its feet on my back as I half lay down, leaped over me, and was out of our way, while how we managed the next part I cannot say; all I know is that there was a horrible struggle, a scrambling rush, the panting groans of those who fought with grim death, and then I lay half fainting upon the shelf, with honest old Tom at my side.

"Thank Heaven!" I muttered.

"Amen, Mas'r Harry!" said Tom, in a whisper, and then for some time no one spoke.

Half an hour after, very quiet and sober of mien, we were leading our mules down the shelf, unnerved and trembling, till once more the plain was reached, and with it rest for the night.

CHAPTER IV.

AND so we journeyed on, day after day, through heat and dust, and arid, stony lands, with my heart sinking lower and lower, and the thought of home not being so very bad a place after all continually forcing itself upon me, till our guide sud-

denly announced our proximity to the place I had come these thousands of miles to seek. And now it was that, from where it had sunk, my heart gave a great leap of exultation, and I sat for long enough upon my bony mule, drinking in the scene before me.

For the last three days our ride had been over stone and sand, with here and there a melancholy palm shooting up from the drab-hued desert, the sun beating down and being reflected up in a way that was almost unbearable, even Tom riding with his mouth open, panting like a dog, his face coated with perspiration and dust; while when at night we had stopped at some wretched makeshift of an inn—a hut generally where a grass hammock and a little lukewarm water was the total accommodation—a wash or bath of any kind had been quite out of the question. But now, as we were descending a steep mountain side, it seemed as if we had suddenly dropped into one of the most lovely spots on earth, riding at once right in beneath the shade of a huge forest, with a sea of green leaves spreading out before us in every direction.

By comparison, the coolness was delightful, and we rode through a vast arcade, over a golden network spread by the sun upon the grassy undergrowth, whilst from far off came that sweetest of sounds to a parched and thirsty traveller, the murmuring of falling water, now soft and gentle, now increasing to a roar.

"Great river, senors," said our guide, pointing forward. "Senor Don John Landell on other side."

"Say, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, just then, "they aint sure where the Garden of Eden was, are they? I'm blest if I don't think we've found the very spot, and if—There she goes!"

I can't say whether Tom's mind was running just then upon Eve, but as a light figure seemed to flit into our sight, and stand gazing at us with bright and wondering eyes, mine did; and for a few minutes after she had disappeared amongst the trees, I sat in my saddle without speaking.

But the glorious verdure around soon made me forget the fair vision; and now riding on a few paces, now halting at an opening in the forest, I sat drinking in the scene with the feelings of one in a dream.

Then we rode on a hundred yards up an ascent, with the sun full upon us once more, to descend a precipitous path, holding on tightly by the mule, which you expected to slip and hurl you down a gulf at your side; but the descent was safely made, and then we stood gazing at a belt of cultivated ground—the forest and river lying off to our right.

"There is the river path, senors," said our guide, "straight down. The ground is soft and bad for the mules, and I go back. You will find a gentleman to take you over the great river, but I would look about me; there are little snakes, the great water-boas, and the crocodiles of the river."

Then, saluting us with his half-bred Spanish politeness, our guide stood while we possessed ourselves of our light luggage, and then led off his mules, leaving us to follow the pointed-out direction, which took us down to the swampy bank of a great muddy river, flowing gently by us, cutting its

way, as it were, through a forest of mighty trees, whose tall stems shot up from the water's edge. There was a small canoe tethered to a sapling, where the path ceased, but no sign of its owner? while half a mile in front, across the river, was an opening in the trees, similar to that in which we stood, which was, doubtless, the path we were to pursue.

We stood in deep shadow; but the sun was flashing from the breast of the river as it rolled slowly on, its even surface unbroken, save here and there by some water bird; while in several places what seemed to be rough tree trunks were floating slowly down with the stream. The great trees were wreathed and festooned to the water's edge with parasites and vines, and now and then the shrill cry of some parrot rang out, its giver flashing into sight for an instant, and then disappearing amidst the glorious verdure.

"Well, Tom," I said, "this is different from the old country."

But he did not reply; when turning, I found him gazing fixedly amongst the swamp herbage, through which was a wet, muddy track, when, following the direction of his gaze, and peering into the shade, I became aware of a pair of the most hideous, hateful eyes fixed upon me that I had ever seen. I was heated with walking over the wet ground, and there was a warm, steamy exhalation rising around; but in a moment my tongue became dry, and a cold perspiration bedewed my limbs, as, fascinated almost, I stood gazing within six feet of the monster, which now began slowly a retrograde motion, till the herbage hid it from our sight. Then there was a loud rustling rush—a splash in the water, and wave after wave proclaimed the size of the beast that had, fortunately for us, declined to attack.

"Whurra!" exclaimed Tom, with a shudder. "Say, Mas'r Harry, do newts grow as big as that out here?"

"It was a crocodile, Tom," I said, with a shiver. "And look—look! Why, the river swarms with them!"

"So it does, seemin'ly," exclaimed Tom, as I pointed out the muddy backs of half a score of them floating down the stream; for I could see now that they were no trees, while here and there on the muddy bank we could make out a solitary monster basking open-mouthed in the sun.

"Come along," I said, "let's get over."

"But will they touch the boat, Mas'r Harry? I ain't afraid, you know, only they are queersome beasts as ever I did see."

"I don't think there's any fear of that," I said; "but, at any rate, we must get over."

And stepping close to the water's edge, I drew the canoe up by its bark rope, disturbing either a small reptile or some great fish as I did so, for there was a rushing swirl in the water, and the frail vessel rocked to and fro.

In spite of Tom's declarations to the effect that such a pea-shuck would sink with us, I stepped in, and he followed; when, taking the paddles, we pushed off, and began to make our way out into the stream, Tom's eyes glancing around as he dipped

in his paddle cautiously, expecting every moment that it would touch a crocodile; but using our paddles—clumsily enough, as may be supposed—we made some way, and then paused to consider whether we should go forward or backward, for we had at one and the same time arrived at the knowledge that the strong stream was our master, and that, until we had attained to some skill in the use of the paddles, any progress up stream towards the landing-place was out of the question.

"We must get across lower down, Tom," I said, "and then walk back."

"What! through the wood, Mas'r Harry?"

"Yes, through the wood."

"Lor! No, don't do that, Mas'r Harry. We shall be eat up alive! Them there woods swarm with snakes—I know they do. And just look there!" he cried, splashing fiercely with his paddle, to frighten a huge reptile, but without effect; for the great beast came slowly floating down in all its native hideousness, its rugged bark-like back and the rough prominences above its eyes out of the muddy water, one eye peering at us with the baleful look peculiar to this fearful beast.

The next minute it had passed us, and we were once more paddling slowly on, the river having swept us quite out of sight of the landing-places. But the sights around were so novel that I rather enjoyed our passage. In spite of Tom's anxiety, every now and then I ceased paddling to gaze at some bright-plumaged bird flitting from tree to tree overhanging the stream. Once I made sure that the great bare vine which swung between two boughs must be a serpent, till, passing by, we made out its real character.

At last, though, I awoke to the fact that it was time to be up and doing, for the current had swept us round a great bend of the river, and below us I saw that for a wide stretch of quite a couple of miles the river was broken up by rapids. Great masses of rock thrust their bare heads out of the water like river monsters, and round them the muddy tide bubbled, and foamed, and eddied.

It was plain enough that we were approaching a dangerous part, and had not our sense warned us of the peril, we had ample warning in the increased swiftness and troubled state of the stream. I saw at a glance that a boat would have but a poor chance of existing amongst the rocky way if it should be swept there, and I had taken a firm grip of my paddle, when—

"Look, Tom!" I cried.

And for a moment our attention was taken up by one of those glorious golden-green and scarlet birds, the trogons, flitting close by us, its emerald crest and gorgeous yard-long tail feathers flashing in the sun, while its brilliant scarlet breast was for a moment reflected in the water.

"Ah, you beauty!" cried Tom, "if I only had my old gun! But, I say, Mas'r Harry, paddle away!"

Already somewhat more used to the propellers, we began to force the boat towards the opposite bank, hoping to get into an eddy that should help us along; but we had dallied with our task, and the stream now ran more swiftly than ever. Still we made some progress, and were contriving to dip to-

gether, when I almost let my paddle pass from my hands, for a strange, wild cry rang along the surface of the water.

"What's that?" I exclaimed.

"I should say it was one of them pleasant brutes out for a holiday—one of them tiger or leopard things, like what we used to see in Wombwell's Show, like great Tom-cats. I'll lay a wager this is the spot where they live when they're at home and go yowling about."

"There it is again!" I exclaimed, excitedly. "Why, it was a cry for help. There is some one in the river!"

"Then he'd better hold his tongue," said Tom, "and not get shouting, or he'll have all these great beasts come rushing at him, same as they did in the ponds at home, when we used to throw in a worm upon a bent pin, and fish for the little newts. There, Mas'r Harry, look at that chap!"

As he spoke, Tom pointed with his paddle at a great uncouth monster, some twelve feet long and tremendously thick, which had raised its head from the slime in which it wallowed upon the edge of the river, and was slowly turning itself, first in one and then in another direction, before splashing a little, and then shooting itself off into deep water with one stroke of its powerful tail.

"Ugh, the brutes!" ejaculated Tom. "They'd make short work for a fellow if he was thrown in for live bait. But, I say, that is some one shouting, Mas'r Harry."

"Paddle down closer towards the rapids, Tom," I said, excitedly.

And for a moment we forgot our own danger, as with a sharp stroke or two we sent the canoe out in full stream, so that it swept down swiftly.

"You're right, Mas'r Harry—you're right!" said Tom, eager now as I was myself. "Look—look, there's a canoe upset."

"Paddle away!" I cried, as another shout came ringing towards us, just as I obtained a good view of what was taking place below us.

"But we shall be over too, Mas'r Harry, if you row like that! Lord help them, though, if there aint a woman in the water!" Tom cried, working his paddle furiously, an example I had set him.

And swaying about, the little vessel raced almost through the troubled waters, which each moment grew more rough, leaping and dancing, and threatening at times to splash right into our frail boat.

Our excitement was pardonable, for, right in front of us, and about two hundred yards down the river, there was a sight which made my nerves tingle, and the paddle in my hands to feel like a straw. A canoe of about double the size of our own had been over-set in the rapids, and, with four figures clinging to it, was rapidly floating down stream amidst the boiling waters, which leaped and seethed round them. Now we could see that two of the figures were making efforts to turn the canoe; but it was evident that in the rough water, and with the others clinging to it, this was impossible; and, evidently half-strangled and bewildered in the fierce, rushing waters, they had given up the next minute, and were clinging to the vessel's sides.

Now it was hurried down a rapid with a tremen-

dous rush, to be tossing the next moment in the deep below, whirling round and round, now half under, now by its buoyancy rising again with its clinging freight, to be swept into an eddy where the water was comparatively calm, but only to be slowly driven back again into the swift current hastening down the rocky slope; and a groan of dismay burst from my breast as I saw the boat dashed against a great, black, jagged mass of rock right in their way. But the next instant they had glided round it, and were again being swept downwards, where the river was one mass of creamy foam.

How we went down I cannot tell you, for it was due to no skill on our part; the wonder is that we were not overset a score of times; but somehow, almost miraculously, we seemed to avoid rock after rock that was scattered in our way, the little canoe bounding along in a mad race as we plied our paddles with all the energy at our command. I have often thought since that our rough action and chance-work way of running the gauntlet amidst the rocks was the reason of our success, where skilled managers of a canoe would have come to grief; but, be that as it may, in a wild, exciting race, we dashed on and on down the gradual watery slope, the noise of many waters thundering in our ears, while, with what I believe is the true generous spirit of an Englishman pervading us, we forgot our own danger in the sight of that incurred by the party in the rapids.

"Go it, Mas'r Harry!" Tom roared, mad almost with excitement, as he scooped away with his paddle. "Hurraw! Who's afraid? That's a good 'un! Now again! Brayvo! lay into it, my hearty!"

We gained upon the upset boat swiftly, when, as the clinging party were swept into a tolerably smooth reach that intervened between a fierce race of water and the next dangerous spot, I saw one of the men leave the canoe and strike boldly out for the shore, followed directly after by two more, whose dusky skin proclaimed them of Indian blood.

"Why, only look there—three men and one woman!" cried Tom. "And if they haven't gone away and left her! This aint old England, Mas'r Harry; we don't do things that how at home. Paddle away! Mind, sir, or you'll have us over! Only wish I had a couple of tallow staves instead of this wooden spoon. Paddle away, sir! Cowardly warmint! That's it, sir; this boat's as light as a cork, but don't have us over. We shall soon reach her now—mind, steady, for I'm scared to death of the waters, and I wouldn't swim as they do, not for a thousand pounds—not but what I could if I liked. That's it, sir, only another thirty yards—long strokes and steady ones, and—hold on, my dear, we're coming."

"Push on, Tom—push on, and save your breath," I cried, "for Heaven's sake! Ah!"

I could not restrain that cry—it burst from my lips, for just at that moment I saw the female figure yet clinging to the overturned canoe glide from her hold, as if drawn away by some invisible agency down, down, gradually beneath the swift tide.

"It's one of them great wild beasts got her!" cried Tom, giving vent to the thought that had flashed across my brain. "Oh! don't—pray, pray don't,

Mas'r Harry!" I heard him shriek. "I'm scared to death of these waters, and if you go I must too, for I swore I'd stick to you like a— Oh, Mas'r Harry!"

With Tom's voice ringing in my ears, but having no more effect than they would have had in staying the swift rush of the rapids, I had in one and the same moment recognized the drowning face, and, paddle in hand, leaped from the frail canoe into the foaming river.

But that was a wild and thrilling time, as, nerving myself to the encounter, I battled with the fierce water, trying to put into practice every feint and feat that I had learned in old bathing times at home, when sporting in the summer evenings in our old river. Speed, though, and skill in swimming seemed unavailing here, as I felt the waters wreath round me, strangling me, as it were, in a cold embrace; then seizing me to drag me here—to drag me there; dashing me against this rock, against that, and directly after sending a cold chill of horror through every nerve, as a recollection of the hideous reptiles abounding in the river flashed upon me, when I felt myself sucked down lower and lower in the vortex of some eddy between the rocks. It was like dreaming of swimming in some horrible nightmare, my every effort being checked when I strove to reach the drowning girl; and again and again, when just on the point of clutching her light garments, I was swept away, to begin once more fighting towards her with the energy of despair.

The next moment my arm was round her, and two little hands closed upon my shoulder, clinging to me with a despairing grip, as I fought hard to keep on the surface; but only to be swept here and there, helpless as a fragment of wood, the muddy water the while thundering in my ears and bubbling angrily at my lips.

Now up, now down—over, and over, and over, rolling along a shallow, smooth platform of rock, and then into deeper water again. I began to feel that I was fighting my last fight, and that the enemy was too strong.

But still I fought on—more feebly, 'tis true, but still with the stubborn determination of an unworthy representative of that nation which was said by a great general not to know when they were beaten.

Then came a respite, as I was swept into still water; but I was too weak now to take advantage of it before I was borne into the next rapid, foaming to receive me with my burden.

The river was here like a series of long, rugged steps, with here fierce, tumbling waters, there a smooth interval, but only to be succeeded again and again by broken water, into another foaming chaos of which I was swept.

It was now one wild confusion of struggling wave and roaring, foaming surf; then came a dim sense that I was half stunned by a fierce blow—that I was growing weaker—that I was drowning fast; and for an instant a pang shot through me as I seemed to see vividly a portion of my past life, and thought of how hard it was to die so young.

I was again swept into the still water, and my arm struck out involuntarily as, my lips well above water,

I drew in a long breath—a long, invigorating draught of the breath of life; but my efforts were but feeble, and my mind was misty and confused, but only for a few moments. In a flash, as it were, of light, the horror of my position came upon me, and I gave utterance to a cry of horror, for suddenly there was a fierce, rushing swirl in the water. I felt something strike me obliquely; then the light figure I had striven so hard to save was almost jerked from my arm, and the next instant we were being borne swiftly along through the water up-stream and towards the shore.

Jerk, jerk, jerk! and I gazed with horror upon the pale face close to mine, fortunately insensible; my eyes seemed ready to start from their sockets with horror; there was a sensation as of a ghostly hand stirring my wet hair; and then once more I gave utterance to a strange, hoarse cry that startled even me; for as—in spite of my weakness—my mental energies grew momentarily clearer, I thoroughly realized the horror of our position, and that we were being dragged rapidly away by one of the ravenous reptiles of the river.

CHAPTER V.—IN THE WOODS.

DEATH, we are told, has been met by the brave-hearted again and again unflinchingly; but such a death as was now threatening me and the poor girl I was trying to save must have made the stoutest blench. For [my part, a chill of horror seemed to pass through every limb, thoroughly unnerving me, so that my efforts were but feeble as I felt myself sweeping through the water towards the bank, where the stream ran swiftly, but free of rocks, while its eddies and whirlpools showed that there were holes and places worn in beneath the banks, to one of which it seemed evident the monster was making.

I made one desperate struggle, as, nearing the bank, the water shallowed; but the slight figure which I held was still dragged swiftly onward, while twice over I felt the rough, slimy body of the monster in contact with my legs. All defence or attack—all prospect of escape, seemed out of the question, and by the action of the water I was turned over helplessly upon my back, the muddy stream flowing over my face, half-strangling me. I had during the last few moments been fast approaching to a dreamy state, which dulled the acute horror of my position; and I believe that a few more moments would have produced insensibility, when I was galvanized, as it were, back into vigorous action by a sound as something grazed my shoulder.

"Now then, hold fast by the side—hold fast!" was shrieked in my ears, as a hand grasped mine, guiding it to the edge of the canoe, to which I clung with renewed energy, as we were racing through the shallows at a tremendous rate. Then came a shouting, and the vigorous beating of the water with a paddle, a tremendous rushing swirl, which nearly overset the canoe, and our locomotion was at an end, the vessel floating lightly in a deep pool beneath the trees. A few strokes of the paddle, and the prow struck the muddy bank; and, before I could recover from the prostration, I felt myself dragged on to the grass, and my arm roughly torn

from the waist it so tightly encircled; but not before I had recognized in the pale, inanimate face that of the bright vision I had seen but a short time before, and also that her clinging garments were torn—rent down one side, evidently where the huge beast had seized her; and then there was the muttering of voices, the rustling of the undergrowth as a passage was forced through it, and we were alone.

"I'd have said thank you for a good deal less than that, if it had been me," said Tom, gruffly, as he stood gazing after the retreating party. "They're a nice lot, Mas'r Harry—swam off like a set of copper-skinned varmints, and left the gal to drown; and when some one else has the pluck to save her, they look savage and disappointed, and snatch her away just as if they were recovering stolen goods. My eye, though, Mas'r Harry, it was a narrer escape,—worse than swinging under that old donkey's nose!"

My only reply was a shudder.

"I didn't think it so precious bad, Mas'r Harry, when we was up at that landing-place in the ship; but I do think now as we're getting it rather warm: only ashore here a few days, and we've had our lodging shook about our ears—I've been pitched over a precipice like the side of a house, and you've been a'most swallowed and drowned by a great newt. I'll give in. It is a trifle hotter than it was at home. But say, Mas'r Harry, it aint going to be all on this style, is it? Why, it's like being heroes in a book—Robinson Crusoe and Man Friday, and all on in that tune, and us 'not knowing how much hotter we're going to have it!"

"Matter of chance, Tom," I said, wringing the water from my clothes, as I stood in the hot sun. "We may be here for years, and have no more adventures. Perhaps, after so rough a welcome, matters may turn out gloriously."

Tom began to whistle, and pick leaves to chew and spit out again, till I pronounced my readiness to proceed.

"Paddles are both in the boat," said Tom; then, as he secured the canoe by its bark rope to a tree, "We've got over the river, Mas'r Harry, that's one thing; but how far we are down below the landing-place I dunno, I'm sure."

We proved to be much farther below than I thought for, enough time elapsing for my clothes to get nearly dry in the patches of hot sun we passed as we wound our way through the forest, the rushing noise of the river on our right guiding us in our efforts to keep within range of the bank, which we avoided on account of the huge beasts we had seen basking there.

"This is a rum sort of country, and no mistake, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, at last, as he stood mopping the perspiration from his face; "but, somehow or other, one feels just the same here as one did in the old place, and I'm as hungry now as if I hadn't had a morsel to eat for a week. Is it much farther, Mas'r Harry?"

"I don't know how many miles we've come," I replied.

But his words had fully accounted for a strange sensation of faintness that troubled me. A little more perseverance, though, brought us to the track

—one that we might have reached in a quarter of the time had we known the way.

A short walk showed us that we were correct, for we went along the track to the river, so as to make sure of this being the one we sought—for being lost in these wilds was something not to be thought of for a minute. There, though, on the other side of the river, was the landing-place from which we had started, only to reach our present position after a roundabout, eventful journey.

"All right, Mas'r Harry—come along," said Tom, turning.

And now, pursuing the track, we found that we were gradually mounting a slope, till the trees were left behind, and we stood upon an eminence looking down upon my uncle's house.

All that we had seen beautiful before seemed to fall before the picture upon which we now gazed, where all that was lavish in nature had been aided by the hand of man, cultivation subduing and enriching, till the region below us blushed in beauty; for we were looking down upon a lightly built, pleasantly shaded house, with its green jalousie-covered windows, and great creeper-burdened verandah, gaily painted, and running right round the house.

The place stood in the midst of a grove of verdure of the most glorious golden green, rich with the great crimson, coral-like blossoms of what is there called *madre del cacao*—the cocoa's mother—tall, regularly planted trees, cultivated for the protection and shade they give to the plants beneath; great bananas loaded with fruit; bright green coffee bushes; and the cocoa with its pods, green, yellow, blood-red, and purple. The roughly erected fences were, so to speak, smothered with glorious trumpet-blossomed convulvi, whose bright hues were peering ever from a bed of heart and spear-shaped richly green leaves.

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CHAPTER VI.—THE HACIENDA.



LEAR and bright was the sky, and wherever the rays of the sun penetrated, it was for them to fall in a shower of golden arrows, and form tracery upon the green carpet beneath the trees, amid whose branches, screaming, chattering, climbing, and hanging head downwards, or fluttering

from bough to bough, were hundreds of rainbow-hued parrots, beautiful as Nature's dyes could paint.

It was a scene of exceeding beauty, and was not lost even upon blunt, hungry Tom.

"Well," he exclaimed, "if this don't pay for coming out, may I never again wire out a bar of best mottled. It's a rum sort of country, though; one time frightening you to death, and the next minute coaxing you into staying. S'pose, Mas'r Harry, that there's a sort of foreign market garden?"

"If I'm not mistaken, Tom, that's my uncle's plantation."

"With all my heart, Mas'r Harry; but choked as I am with thirst, I should like one of them pumpkins, or some of the other outlandish fruits. Let's have a pen'orth, sir. My! what a sight, though! I hope this is the spot. But there, only look, Mas'r Harry; did you ever see such sparrows? Look at the colour of them! If I don't take my old mother home a cage-full, and one of them red and yaller poll-parrots, I don't stand here now. But are you sure your uncle John lives here, Mas'r Harry?"

"I think this must be the spot, Tom," I said, "according to the guide's description."

"Why, he must be quite a lord, sir. He's never touched taller or soap in his life, I'll bet. But, say, Mas'r Harry, we look rough 'uns to go and see him, don't us?"

I laughed, and then led the way, Tom following close behind, till we entered a sort of courtyard surrounded by sheds, with men and women busily at work at what I afterwards learned was the preparation of the cocoa.

"And you're Harry Grant, then, are you?" said the tall, brown-skinned man, who was pointed out to me as the owner of the place, and who, upon my introducing myself, received me with a hearty English grip of the hand. "Hang it, my lad, it brings old times back to see a face fresh from home! You're your mother's boy, plain enough.

But come in, and welcome, my lad, though we have been in a bit of a stew; my girl upset in a canoe and half drowned; but the gentleman with her saved her. She's not much the worse for it, though."

I turned round hastily, and just in time to stop Tom, who was about to blurt out the whole affair; for I thought it better to be silent, I hardly knew why, my mind being just then in a state of confusion, it being rather startling to find that I had probably been the means of saving the life of my own cousin; though why the gentleman who was with her—whoever he might be—should have the credit of what Tom and I had done, I did not know. Anyhow, I was to be beneath the same roof, and I thought matters would come right in the end.

My uncle led the way into a cool, half-darkened room, where I was introduced to an aunt, of whose existence I was not aware, inasmuch as she was the lately married widow of a neighbouring planter. Then I heard my uncle say—

"Not lying down, Lill? All right again? Glad of it! Well, this is a cousin for you, and I hope you will be good friends."

I hardly know what I did or said just then; for timidly coming forward out of the shade, I saw the fair vision of the morning, but now deadly pale—the maiden whom a couple of hours before I had rescued from so horrible a death. She was dressed in a simple muslin, and her long, fair hair—yet clammy and damp—was tied with a piece of blue ribbon, and hung down her shoulders. It was the same sweet English face that might be seen in many a country home far away in our Northern islands; but out there, in that tropic land, with its grand scenery and majestic vegetation, she seemed to me, in spite of her pallor, to be fairy-like and ethereal; and for a while, as I thought of the events of a short time before—events in which she was unconscious that I had played a somewhat important part—I was blundering and awkward, and unable to say more than a few of the commonest words of greeting.

You may smile at my naïve description; but as she came forward, I seemed to feel for the first time that I had a heart, for it gave one or two great thumps against my chest; and as I took the little, soft, creamy-looking hand held out to me, the contact sent the blood flushing to my temples, when, instead of my few muttered words of greeting, I felt that I ought to have gone down on my knees as to some divinity, or have kissed the little hand; but I did neither.

Cousin! It was as if I had come suddenly into the presence of some goddess as depicted by the painters of old; and as I drank in the long, rippling golden hair, the soft, fair complexion and gentle blue eyes, I felt as if I wanted to groan, and then rush out amongst the glorious trees into the silence of the forest, where I could throw myself down, and lie, and dream, and wonder, as I painted something indescribable in the future—something new, and of which I had hitherto never dreamed. The scene around had seemed to me like Eden; but this was to my excited fancy a very heaven, and, with a strange ecstasy pervading me, I forgot the long, weary sea voyage, the tedious mule rides, the

heat and exhaustion; and I believe that I should have made quite an ass of myself when I recalled how, but a short time before, I had saved this bright being's life, if I had not suddenly been brought to myself by my uncle's voice and the sight of a pair of eyes.

I have no doubt that they all thought me an awkward, clumsy oaf, and I must have looked it; but, as a rule, young fellows who plunge headlong into the tender passion do not look to their best advantage. However, my silly, romantic state was suddenly invaded by my uncle, and, as before said, I became conscious of a pair of eyes.

"Harry," said my uncle, performing the ceremony of introduction, "Mr.—(I beg his pardon) Don—Don Pablo Garcia, a neighbour of mine—the gentleman who just saved Lilla's life. Garcia, my nephew—my sister's son—from old England."

Instinctively I held out my hand, and the next moment it was clasping something cold and damp and fishlike. A few words in English passed, but they were muttered mechanically, and for a few moments, each apparently unable to withdraw his hand, we two stood looking in each other's eyes, my expression—if it was a true index of my heart—being that of wonder and distrust; for I seemed again, for the first time in my life, to be undergoing a new series of sensations. I knew in that instant of time that I was gazing into the eyes of a deadly enemy—of a man who, for self-glorification, had arrogated to himself the honour of having saved Lilla's life, probably under the impression that we, being strangers, were bound down the river, and would never again turn up to contradict him. What he had said, how much he had taken upon himself, or how much had been laid upon him through the lying adulations of his Indian servants, I do not know; but I was conscious of an intense look of hatred and dislike—one that was returned by a glance of contempt which made his teeth slightly grate together, though he tried to conceal all by a snake-like smile as he recovered himself, and, seeking a way out of his difficulty, exclaimed—

"The senor and I have met before: he helped me, to save our woodland flower from the river."

"Indeed! My dear Harry!" exclaimed my uncle, catching my disengaged hand in his, while by an effort I dragged the other away from Garcia's cold clutch, his eyes fixing mine the while, and seeming to say, "Be careful, or I'll have your life!"—mine, if they could speak a language that he could interpret, plainly saying, "You cowardly hound, you left her to perish!"

"It was nothing on my part, uncle," I said, quietly—"nothing but what any fellow from the old country would have done."

The next moment, Mrs. Landell, my new aunt, had thrown her arms round my neck. Formality of greeting was at an end, and, with tears in her eyes, she thanked me and welcomed me to the hacienda.

I was longing for the scene to be at an end, for I was growing troubled and confused, when once more the tell-tale blood swept into my face, as I blushed like a great girl; for Lilla came up, and, with the colour mantling, too, in her pale cheeks, thanked me for what I had done.

It was some few minutes before I was sufficiently cool and collected to have a good look at Garcia, when I found him to be a tall, well-shaped, but swarthy young fellow, about five years my senior. He was handsome, but there was a sinister look about his dark eyes, and, in spite of his effeminacy, his lithe limbs betokened great strength. An instinctive feeling of dislike, though, kept growing upon me, although there was a pleasant smile, and a display of regular white teeth, which he turned upon me every time he encountered my eyes, as he lounged there smoking a cigar, whose fragrance betokened its origin. He was easy of mien, well-dressed, and evidently at home there; while by contrast I was shabby, travel-stained, and awkward.

I disliked him at first because I knew him to be a cur and a liar; but soon—ay, before ten minutes had elapsed—I knew why my instinctive dislike was increasing every moment we were together. I learned why we were to be enemies to the end; for after smoking for some time in silence, listening the while with smiling face to my uncle's questions concerning home—questions which I answered clumsily, growing each moment more put out and annoyed; for it seemed to me that Garcia's smiles were pitying, and that he was comparing his grace with my awkwardness—he rose, crossed over to Lilla, who was seated, took her hand in his as if it belonged to him of right, raised it to his lips, and then, with a smiling farewell to all present, he whispered a few words to my cousin, gave me—his lips smiling the while—a sharp, meaning look from between his half-closed eyelids, and then his figure darkened the sunshine streaming in at the door for an instant, and he was gone.

CHAPTER VII.—"ALL IS NOT GOLD THAT GLITTERS."

"WELL, lad," said my uncle, when, refreshed by a pleasant bath and a glass or two of goodly wine with the meal spread for me, I sat with him in the shaded room, my aunt—a pleasant, comely Englishwoman—seated with her daughter working by one of the open windows—"well, lad, people don't come a four or five thousand miles' journey on purpose to pay visits. What have you got in your eye?"

"Frankly, uncle," I said, "I don't know. I could not rest at home, and felt that I must go abroad; and now I must say that I am glad of my resolution."

I thought at first, as I was speaking, of the beautiful scenery; but in the latter part of my speech I was looking towards Lilla, and for a moment our eyes met.

My uncle shook his head as I finished speaking. "Soap-boiling isn't a pleasant trade, Harry," he said; "but, as the old saying goes, 'Dirty work brings clean money.' There's always been a comfortable home for you, hasn't there?"

"Yes, uncle," I said, impatiently.

"And plenty to eat, and drink, and wear?"

"Yes, uncle."

"And your father kept you at good schools till you were seventeen or eighteen?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Then—it's plain speaking; but I must give it

to you, Harry—you were a young fool to leave it all. You were like the dog with the shadow: You've dropped a good mouthful of meat to grasp at nothing. You'd have done better sticking to the soap."

"I couldn't, uncle," I exclaimed.

"Ah! that's what all you young donkeys say. Only to think of it—throwing up the chance of a good sure trade!"

"But, my dear uncle, I was so unsuited for it, though I am ready enough to work. If you can give me employment, pray do so; for do not think I have come to be a burden to you."

"My dear boy," he said, gravely, "I don't think anything of the sort. You are welcome here; and we owe you, it seems, the life of our dear child, though what your share was in saving her I don't know. Don't think, though, that we are not glad to see you. There," he said, laughing—"there's your aunt ready again to throw her arms around your neck, you see!"

Mrs. Landell had dropped her work, and crossed over to lay her hand upon my shoulder, while there was a tear—one bright, gem-like tear of gratitude—sparkling in Lilla's eye as she looked up timidly from her work, and once more that stupid young heart of mine gave a tremendous thump against my chest.

There was a pause then for a few minutes, when, in a thick, husky voice, I once more tried to speak.

"I'm sure," I said, "your welcome is warmer than I deserve; and indeed, uncle, I wish to be no burden to you. If you would rather not employ me, say so, frankly; but perhaps you might, all the same, put me in the way of getting on as you have done."

"As I have done!" he said, laughing. "I see, my dear boy, you look at things with just the same eyes that I did when I came over years ago. It's a lovely country, isn't it, Harry?"

"Glorious!" I cried, excitedly.

"Yes," he said, sadly; "glorious as the gilded frame of a mirror—all lustre and brightness—while underneath it is composition, and wood, and ill-smelling glue. Why, my dear boy, I am only living from hand to mouth. This looks, of course, all very bright and beautiful to you, and a wonderful contrast to hazy, foggy, cold old England—Heaven bless it! But fire-flies, and humming-birds, and golden sunshine, and gaily-painted blossoms are not victuals and drink, Harry; and besides, when you set to and earn your victuals and drink, you don't know but what they will all be taken away from you. We've no laws here, my lad, worth a rush. We're a patriotic people here, with a great love of our country—we Spanish, half-bred republican heroes," he said, bitterly; "and we love that country so well, Harry, that we are always murdering, and enriching it with the blood of its best men. It might be a glorious place; but man curses it, and we are always having republican struggles, and bloodshed, and misery. We are continually having new presidents here, my lad; and after being ruined three times, burned out twice, and saving my life by the skin of my teeth, the bright flowers and great green leaves seem to be powdered with ashes, and I'd gladly, any day, change this beautiful place, with its rich planta-

tions, for fifty acres of land in one of the shires at home."

"But don't you take rather a gloomy view of it all, uncle?" I said, as I looked at him curiously.

But to my great discomfiture he burst out laughing, for he had read my thoughts exactly.

"My liver is as sound as yours, Harry, my boy," he said; "and I don't believe that there's a heartier man within fifty miles. No, my lad, I'm not jaundiced. There's no real prosperity here. The people are a lazy, loafing set, and never happy but when they are in hot water. There's the old, proud Hidalgo blood mixed up in their veins: they are too grand to work—too lazy to wash themselves. There isn't a decent fellow in the neighbourhood, except one, and his name is Garcia—eh, Lill?" he said, laughing.

Lilla's face crimsoned as she bent over her work, while a few minutes after she rose, and whispered to Mrs. Landell.

"You must excuse me, Harry," said my aunt, rising. "Lilla is unwell—the shock has been too much for her."

The next moment I was alone with my uncle, who proceeded in the same bitter strain—

"Yes, my lad, commerce goes on nohow here—everything's sluggish, and I cannot see how matters are to mend. I'm glad to see you—heartily glad you have come. Stay with us a few months, if you are determined upon a colonial life; see all you can of the country, and judge for yourself; but Heaven forbid that I should counsel my sister's child to settle in such a revolutionary place!"

I was not long in finding out the truth of my uncle's words. The place was volcanic, and earthquakes of no uncommon occurrence; but Nature in the soil was not one-half as bad as Nature in the human race—Spanish half-blood and Indian—with which she had peopled the region; for they were, to a man, stuffed with explosive material, which the spark of some speaker's language was always liable to explode.

But I was delighted with the climate, in spite of the heat; and during the calm, cool evenings, when the moon was glancing through the trees, bright, pure, and silvery, again and again I thought of how happy I could be there but for one thing.

That one thing was not the nature of the people, nor their revolutionary outbursts; for I may as well own that commerce or property had little hold upon my thoughts, until I found how necessary the latter was for my success. My sole thought in those early days, and the one thing that troubled me, was the constant presence of my uncle's wealthy neighbour, Pablo Garcia.

It was plain enough that he had been for months past a visitor, and that he had been looked upon as a suitor for Lilla's hand; but I could not discover whether she favoured him or no, for, after meeting him a few times, his very presence, with his calm, supercilious treatment of one whom he evidently hated from the bottom of his soul, was so galling to me, that upon his appearance I used to go out and ramble away for hours together, seeking the wilder, wooded parts, and the precipitous spurs of the mountains, climbing higher and higher, till more

than once in some lonely spot I came upon some trace of a bygone civilization—ruined temple, or palace of grand proportions, but now overthrown and crumbling into dust, with the dense vegetation of the region springing up around, and in many places so covering it that it was only by accident that I discovered, in the darkened twilight of the leafy shade, column or mouldering wall, and then sat down to wonder and try and think out of the histories of the past who were the people that had left these traces of a former grandeur; and then over some carven stone light would spring to my understanding—a light that brought with it a thrill of hope. Then I would return, as night threatened to hide the track, back to my uncle's, to be treated coldly, as I thought, by Lilla, while more than once it seemed that my uncle gazed upon me in a troubled way.

CHAPTER VIII.—TOM SPEAKS HIS MIND.

A COUPLE of months soon glided away—a time of mingled misery and pleasure. At one time I was light-hearted and happy; at another, low-spirited and depressed; for I could not see that there was the slightest prospect of my hopes ever bearing fruit. I was growing nervous, too, about Garcia: not that I feared him, but his manner now betokened that he bore me ill-will of the most intense character.

As for Lilla, the longer I was at the hacienda the more plain it became that she feared him: shuddering at times when he approached—tokens of dislike that made his eyes flash, and for which it was very evident that he blamed me.

But his blame was unjust: he had credited me with having made known the cowardly part he had played on the river; but though my uncle and aunt were ignorant of it, the news had reached Lilla's ears, the medium being Tom Bulk.

Tom had settled down very comfortably at the hacienda, taking to smoking and hanging about the plantation sheds, and doing a little here or there as it pleased him, but none the less working very hard; and many a time I had come across him glistening with perspiration as he tugged at some heavy bag, with all an Englishman's energy, when all around were sluggishly looking on. He studiously avoided the woods, though, save when he saw me off upon a ramble; and it was one day, when I was standing by Lilla's side, at an open window, previous to taking a long walk, that our attention was taken up by high words in the yard close at hand.

That Tom was one of the actors was plain enough, for his words came, loud, clear, and angry, to where we stood, and it was evident that he was taking the part of one of the Indian girls, who was weeping, probably from blows inflicted by one of her countrymen, whose gallantry is not proverbial.

"You red varmint!" cried Tom, fiercely, "I'll let you know what's what! We don't strike women in our country—no, not even if they hit us."

Interested as I was, the recollection of a sharp slap I had heard at home would come to my memory.

"And I tell you what, if you touch her again I'll make that face of yours a prettier colour than it is now."

"Pray go and tell my father," whispered Lilla, anxiously. "Quarrels here are very serious sometimes, and end in loss of life."

Crack! There was the sound of a blow, followed by a woman's shriek of pain.

"Why, you cowardly hound!" I heard Tom shout. "You dare hit *her*, then—you who sneaked off along with your grand Spanish Don when the boat was upset, and left young miss to drown! You're a brave one, you are; and then you all go and take the credit, when it was all Mas'r Harry who saved her. Take that, you beggar, and that—and that!"

Tom's words were accompanied by the sounds of heavy blows; and on leaping out of the window, I came upon him, squaring away, and delivering no meanly-planted blows upon the chests and faces of a couple of Indians, while a woman crouched trembling and weeping, and writhing with pain, upon the ground.

"That's a settler for you, anyhow!" said Tom, as he sent one of his adversaries staggering back for a few yards, to fall heavily, when the other retreated, but only for both to out with a knife each, and again come forward to the attack.

But my appearance upon the scene stayed them, and they slunk, scowling, away.

"I'll knock the wind out of some on 'em, Mas'r Harry, spite of their knives," cried Tom, excitedly. "I'll let 'em know how an Englishman serves them that knocks women about. Hit her with a great thick stick, he did—cuss him! I'll let him know!"

"Be quiet, Tom! Are you mad?" I said, catching him by the collar; for he was squaring away at the Indians, who were a couple of dozen yards away.

"What did he go knocking her about for? Yah! Mas'r Harry, they're a rotten lot out here, and the country's a thousand times too good for them!"

By degrees I got Tom cooled down, and in the house. When returning, I found Lilla standing watching for me at the window, but only to gaze at me with a strange, troubled look, half pain, half pleasure; and before I could speak she had fled.

But an hour had not passed before I came upon her again, speaking anxiously to Tom. They did not see me approach; and, as I was close up, I was just in time to hear Tom exclaim—

"But he did, miss, and stuck to you when all the rest had got ashore—the Don and all."

Lilla gave a faint shriek as I spoke; and then darting at me a look of reproach, she hurried away, leaving me excited and troubled, for she had learned a secret that I had intended should not come to her ears.

"How dare you go chattering about like that?" I cried, fiercely, to Tom; for I was anxious to have some one to blame.

"Don't care, Mas'r Harry," he said, sulkily. "Miss Lilla asked me, and I never told her only the truth. They are a cowardly set of hounds, the whole lot of 'em, and I'll take any couple of 'em, one down and t'other come on, with a hand tied behind me."

"We shall have to go, Tom," I said, bitterly. "What with your brawls and the mischief you have made, this will be no place for us."

I spoke with gloomy forebodings in my mind, for I could not but think that trouble was to be our lot.

Poor and without prospects, and with a rich and favoured rival, what was I to hope for? Indeed, I felt ready to despair.

"Say, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, penitently, "taint so bad as that, is it?"

"Bad! Yes, Tom," I said, gloomily.

And I turned and left him.

It was a day or two after. I had only seen Lilla at meals, to find her shy and *distract*. She hardly seemed to notice me, but I had the satisfaction of seeing that Garcia fared no better.

But he smiled pleasantly, evidently to conceal the rage that burned within him, and more than once there was a hateful glare in his eye that evidently boded no good to those who crossed his path; and it seemed as if I had not only crossed his path, but now stood right in his way.

We had just finished the mid-day meal. Garcia had been with us, and, on Lilla rising, he had followed her to the door, but she had turned from him with a look of contempt, when, white with passion, he had been unable to control himself, but dashed out of the place, muttering fiercely.

My uncle had seen all, and his countenance lowered, but for awhile he did not speak. He walked to a closet, took out a cigar, and sat smoking till Mrs. Landell had left the room, when, beckoning me to him, he pointed to a chair, and then, as soon as I was seated, he gave utterance to what was in his mind.

"Harry, my lad," he said, "I am a plain, straightforward fellow, and I like frankness. I'm going now to speak very plainly to you, for I'm not blind. You've taken a fancy to little Lill."

I rose, holding by the back of my chair, blushed, blundered, and then stood without a word.

"I see I am right," he said, coolly. "But look here, Hal—I can't call to mind a single dishonourable act committed by a member of either of the families from which you sprang. Now, listen to me: have you ever said a word—you know what I mean—to Lilla?"

"On my soul, no, uncle!" I exclaimed, warmly.

"Quite right, my lad—quite right, for it would not do. You see, Hal, she has money in her own right, and you are not worth twopence. The girl is in my care. I hold her from her relations, as it were, in trust; and it seems to me that it would be like taking advantage of my position if I encouraged anything between her and a poor relative of my own. You'll have to go away, Harry, unless you can make me a promise, and keep to it."

"What am I to promise?" I said, gloomily; for he had ceased speaking, and I began to realize what going away meant. "What am I to promise?" I said again.

"Promise me, as a man of honour, that you will not in any way take advantage of your position here."

"Is it likely," I said, bitterly, "when I am not worth twopence, and there is some one else in the field?"

"Don't be spiteful, lad, because things don't go as you wish. We all have to bear crosses in our time. But, as you say, there's some one else in the field. Garcia is an old lover, and I am under obli-

gations to him. You must not in any way cross his path, Hal; for he is rich, and possesses a good deal of power over the Indians about here. I should say, Hal, that in this lawless country that man's life would not be safe who stood between him and his wishes. Don't offend him, Hal—don't offend him, Hal. He's a good fellow, but, like all those half-bloods, very susceptible."

"I'll promise you anything you like," I said, gloomily; "but don't send me away. Let me stay and do something, so as not to be an encumbrance to you; but don't send me away."

"No one wants to send you away, Hal," said my uncle, kindly. "Look about you and see the country—shoot and fish a little too. I need not say beware of the caymen—the river swarms with them. See all you can of the place, and then you'll have to try somewhere else. Texas or one of the States; those are the places for a young fellow like you."

I sighed to myself, for it seemed to me now that there was no place on earth bearable but the one where Lilla dwelt; and then, clapping me on the shoulder, my uncle rose and went out.

I followed him at the end of a few minutes, and, so as to be alone, I wandered away from the house, and heedlessly took one of the paths that led down to the river bank.

CHAPTER IX.—UNDER FASCINATION.

IT was very hot, but I did not notice it as I walked slowly and thoughtfully on. The sun was kept from beating down upon me by the dense foliage; but there was a steamy heat arising that at another time I should have felt oppressive. The country was so completely in a state of nature all around, that half a mile from the hacienda one almost seemed to be traversing places where the foot of man had never trod. But nothing seemed then to take my attention, for I was forcing myself to remember that I was to think no more about Lilla; and at last I had worked myself round to believe that I should respect the promise given to my uncle while I devoted myself to a project that had fixed itself in my mind—a project full of romance and imagination, one that might make me wealthy—in a position wherein I could laugh at Garcia's pretensions, and boldly ask my uncle's consent, for I was hopeful of obtaining Lilla's. I was poor now, but need not remain so. Suppose by one grand stroke I could possess myself of the riches of a prince—how then?

The thought of it all was so exciting that I strode on, rapt in the golden vision, till reason pointed out two obstacles: I might not succeed; and even if I did succeed, I might be too late, and find that Garcia had won the prize we both coveted.

"I'll try, though," I muttered.

And then I laughed bitterly as I thought of my uncle's warning. I was not afraid of Garcia, for he was at heart, I knew, a coward; but until I was in a position to come forward I felt sadly that my duty was to avoid Lilla—to leave all to the future; for, with the chances of failure so strongly opposed to me, it would not have been fair to have asked her to wait for what might never come to pass; and then, with the recollection of my beggarly position taunting me, I told myself bitterly that I might as

well go back home and turn soap-boiler, and not stay out there indulging in golden dreams.

It was a scene almost of enchantment where I stood musing; but the beauties around had no charms for me. I was too much engrossed with the thoughts of old readings respecting the region in which I then was. I was recalling its history, and the assertions of old writers respecting its wealth in gems and the precious metals. I did not see that twice over a timid deer had gazed at me for a moment, and then bounded away through the brake; neither that again and again a deadly cascabel had glided wormlike almost from beneath my feet, uttering a low, ominous hiss as it wriggled away through the tall grass. Gorgeously-painted butterflies, grand in size, fluttered before me, to settle here and there upon some blossom bright as themselves, and then flit away again through the shadowy, golden-rayed forest arcades. Gem-like humming-birds darted here and there, while hardly less bright parroquets of many a hue shrieked, whistled, and climbed in restless fashion around. Once there was a heavy, scuffling noise, and a small alligator dashed away towards a creek; but I could see nothing but gold—gold that should make me rich, and win for me Lilla's love—a love that I dared to hope was mine already, even though I was but a beggarly adventurer.

Gold—always gold—everything was gilded; and through the golden haze that seemed to glow around me I saw a golden future of brightness, and happiness, and love. I grew more and more excited with the thoughts that pressed upon me, and at last, with a sensation of triumph, I exclaimed aloud—

"History shall be my divining rod, and the earth shall yield up her treasures! I shall not be the first adventurer to the golden mines who has brought home treasures; only that, if I win, I shall also gain a treasure greater far than those of old, for Lilla will also be my prize."

This was the kind of mental stilt-talking I indulged in that day, seeing only the golden side. No doubt it seems very romantic and silly to the reader; but I have known young men taken badly with that distemper called first love, just as romantic and excitable. In fact, many of us, as we grow older, recall our sensations, acts, and deeds, felt and performed during that strange delirium, with something like a smile upon our lips, though, at the time, every reader will agree with me that first love is no joke.

I was romantic enough, and could only see the golden side; but there was a future before me such as I could not dream of—a reverse, terrible, thrilling, and enough, could I have penetrated the unknown, to have made me turn shuddering away, daring not, for the sake of others, to prosecute searches whose results would have been too terrible to contemplate.

Rousing myself from my reverie, with my mind fully made up as to my future proceedings, I looked round, to find that I was but a very short distance from the hacienda, in a beautiful part of the forest that my uncle had as yet spared, but which he talked of, before long, clearing, and adding to the plantation which it bounded.

I walked on for a dozen yards, parting the under-

growth as I went, walking cautiously now, for I had suddenly awakened to the fact that there might be danger in every bush or tuft of luxuriant, reedy grass; but there was, I knew, a beaten track a little farther on, which led to the plantation through which I meant to return.

And then, fifty yards through the dense vegetation, I came upon a creek—a mere ditch—leading to the river, half full of marshy growth, when, walking back a few yards for impetus, I ran from the bank, and was in the act of leaping the creek, when every nerve seemed to thrill with a horrible sense of chilling dread, as beneath my feet there was a rushing, rustling noise, mingled with the splashing of mud and water, the reedy grass bent and waved in different directions, and, though invisible to me, it was evident that some hideous beast-reptile of some kind, but whether serpent or cayman I could not tell, was retreating towards the river, perhaps only to turn upon me the next moment.

The danger was not visible; but unseen perils are sometimes more dreadful than those we meet face to face, when the imagination does not magnify the horror.

At any rate, with my heart beating heavily, I alighted amongst the grass on the other side, dashed on, and a few minutes after was in the track, down which I turned, but only to stop spell-bound the next minute, as I reached a flowery opening, across which lay the decaying huge trunk of a large fallen tree.

The place was a dense thicket all around of bright-hued blossoms, with their attendant train of bird and gorgeous insect. Huge trees threw their sheltering arms across, to break up the sun's rays into golden showers, which flecked and danced upon every verdant spot; but the great beauty of the scene which held me there was the sight of Lilla seated upon the fallen trunk, her little straw hat hanging from one muslin-covered arm by the knotted strings, and a little basket filled to overflowing with bright-hued flowers fallen at her feet.

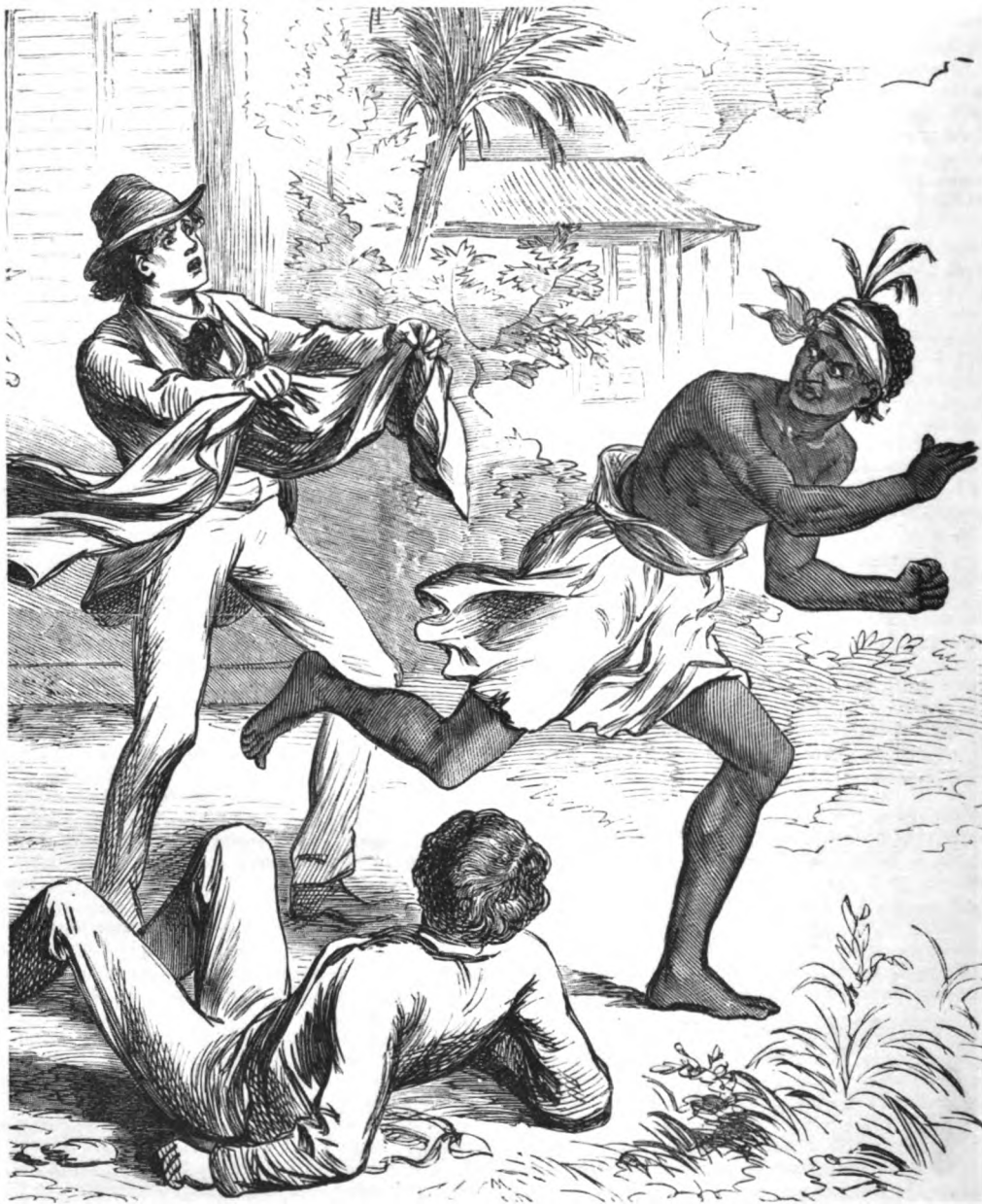
I could not move nor speak for a few minutes, and then I was hesitating as to what I should do: avoid every meeting such as this out of respect to my promise, or warn her that but a short distance back I had come upon some hidden danger.

"She will laugh at me," I thought. "She is so used to hear of the forest inhabitants; and besides, after all, I did not see anything; it may only have been some timid animal escaping. I will go back another way."

In spite of myself a sigh escaped me as I gazed at the graceful form; and then, as I leaned forward, it seemed to me that her attitude was unnatural and strained—that she was gazing intently upwards, as if at something a short distance above her head.

I took a step forward—another and another, but she did not move; when, following the direction of her gaze, I found her eyes were fixed with a strange fascination at the great bough above her—a huge gnarled and knotted bough, with here and there a tuft of foliage upon it, while its great, thick bark was tinted and shady with rich brown and amber mosses, and—

"Good heavens!" I ejaculated, and then I was



THE INDIAN ESCAPES FROM THE HACIENDA.

speechless. A sense of horror was constricting my heart. I was, as it were, fixed to the ground where I stood, hardly able to breathe, for as I had gazed at the rich marking on the great knotted limb, a strange, shuddering vibration had passed through it—it was in motion for many feet along its thickest part, and the amber markings glistened; for they were upon the scaly skin of a huge serpent, lying in many a fold and convolution upon the mighty bough.

What did it mean—what was going to happen?

I could not tell; but a deadly sickness came over me—a cold, clammy perspiration bedewed my limbs. I could only see as through a mist, but plainly enough I could make out that fold was gliding over fold in a horrible lacing and enlacing of gigantic knots, till slowly the reptile's head was thrust forward, with a gentle waving motion, rising from amidst a tuft of leaves; and then, as the gliding of the folds continued, the head descended in a slow, waving, swinging fashion, foot after foot nearer and nearer to Lilla, a forked tongue flashing and playing about the frightful jaws, and the hideous eyes fascinating the poor girl, so that I saw her gradually moving towards it.

Slowly, and ever rising and falling, the huge serpent's head was lowered foot after foot of its vast length, while fold after fold was gliding over the bough, and all this while I stood fixed to the earth as in the nightmare of a horrible dream.

CHAPTER X.—WHAT FOLLOWED THE ESCAPE.

I SAID at the end of the last chapter that it was like being in the nightmare of some horrible dream. I repeat that assertion; for, as I recall my sensations, I see again the horrible swaying head playing gently up and down, nearer and nearer to its victim, the sun glistening on the burnished coils, while others were hidden, to have their presence revealed by the quivering of twig and trembling of leaf, as they passed fold over fold, the monstrous reptile playing, as it were, with its victim, and approaching in a slow, leisurely manner; but it was with the sense that in an instant it could fling itself upon its prey with the speed, force, and certainty of a well-cast lasso. It was the play of the cat tribe with prey; for I knew the mighty strength and elasticity of the coils—how they could dart, plunge, and then be rolled one upon the other round a helpless body in a hideous knot—how the knot would tighten till bones cracked and splintered, and the victim was reduced to a shapeless mass, ready to receive the horrible saliva of the monster previous to deglutition.

I could only stand with tottering knees, parted lips, staring eyes, and painfully drawn breath, longing to engage in the unequal fight, or to, at least, make some noise to divert the horrible beast from its expected banquet; but my mouth and throat were dry—I could not utter a sound. I was numbed in body, but the mental anguish was fearful, for all activity seemed to have fled to the seat of thought, and in imagination I saw all that was to follow, till the tapering body of the huge serpent was bloated and distended almost to bursting by its dreadful meal.

And all this time—a time whose duration seemed

to me hours—Lilla did not move. At first, while being drawn under the loathsome reptile's fascination, she had gradually leaned towards it, till, fixed of eye, she had stopped perfectly motionless, as inch after inch her intended murderer approached.

I would gladly have closed my eyes, but I could not, any more than I could afford help. And now, unwilling witness that I was, I saw that the moment of extreme horror was approaching, for the serpent had drawn its folds on to a portion of the branch free from foliage; the coils were bent as if ready for a spring, the head was drawn back, the jaws distended; and at last I gave utterance to a hoarse cry and sprang forward, the spell that had held me broken, and the next instant Lilla was in my arms, just as I heard a rustle; then there was a rush, and I was dashed violently to the ground.

But there were no coils round either of us, lashing us in a horrible embrace—no fangs were fixed in my shoulder; but lashing, darting, and whipping itself, as it were, in every direction, beating down tall grass and bushy growth, its horrible eyes flashing with pain and rage, the serpent was close at hand, while the next instant its coils were wrapped round a large jaguar, whose teeth and claws were fixed in the thickest part of the reptile, holding on with all its might, at the same time that, cat-like in its every act, it tore and ripped away at its enemy's body with the great talons of its hind legs.

There was a fierce, savage, worrying growl, the snapping and rustling of tree and shrub, the lashing about of the serpent's body, as, now coiled round its assailant, now forced by agony to unwind, the two terrors of the South American forest continued their struggle. Now they were half hidden by the undergrowth, whose disturbance only showed the changes in the savage warfare; now they struggled into sight, and it was very evident that the serpent was being worsted in the encounter, the jaguar having in the first strokes of its powerfully-armed hind legs inflicted terrible wounds, which incapacitated the reptile from using its potent weapon—the crushing power of its folds.

For a few minutes I could hardly believe in our escape from so horrible a peril; but, so far, we were undoubtedly safe, the tide of war now beginning, indeed, to roll away, it being evident that the jaguar was thoroughly worsting its enemy. Twice over I saw the huge tail of the serpent rise above the long grass, to vibrate and quiver in the air, twisting as if the horrible beast were in extreme agony; then it disappeared, and I prepared to try and bear Lilla away, for it was plain that the long-continued struggle was bringing the combatants back towards where we crouched.

But they only came near enough for me to catch, amidst the rapid evolutions, two or three glances of the jaguar's glistening, spotted coat, as he clung, still apparently unharmed, to his long, lithe adversary, whose head was darting here, there, everywhere, in search of an avenue for escape. Then, again, came a series of writhing contortions, as the serpent twined itself in its agony round the quadruped; and over and over, with the foliage crackling and snapping, they rolled, but ever now farther and farther away, till it was with a feeling of

extreme thankfulness that I knelt there, holding the fainting girl in my arms, gazing eagerly in her pale, gentle face, and thinking of the fearful fate she had escaped.

I knew that I ought to hurry away with her, to try



and bear her home; but as I gazed at the sweet face before me, with the blue-veined lids drawn over the gentle eyes—felt the faint, fluttering breath fanning my cheek, and knew how dearly I loved her—I forgot all my uncle's words, the promises I had given him; for I was awaking to the fact of how strong a tie was that which bound two young hearts together; and, straining her to my breast, my lips were pressed upon her cheeks, forehead, temple, as I called upon her to awake, in my insensate folly believing her to be dead.

Her eyes unclosed the next moment, to gaze in mine with a wild, horrified aspect, till, awaking fully to the fact that she was saved, she flung her arms tightly round my neck, clinging to me, and then buried her face, sobbing vehemently, in my bosom.

Peril, duty! How could I think of those as, bending over her, I pressed my lips upon her glossy hair, to whisper—

"Lilla—dearest Lilla!"

No more was said; but she did not shrink from me, and I knew that I might hope. How the time passed I never knew; but it was, in its change from horror to delight, amongst the happiest periods of my existence.

But at last reason began to assert itself, and my uncle's words began to force themselves upon me. There was the form of Garcia, too, like a dark shadow of evil, forcing itself across our path, and it only wanted the incongruous words which followed to bring me fully to my senses, and waken me from my dream of love and life's sunshine.

Lilla had just raised her blushing face to mine, as she tried now, feebly, to free herself from my encircling arms; our lips met for an instant, and then I started angrily up, for from close behind came the words—

"Say, Mas'r Harry, is that there the custom of the country?"

"You impertinent dog, how dare you?" I exclaimed, angrily. "What do you mean by spying there, and then asking such a question?"

"Only wanted to know, Mas'r Harry; because if it is the custom it's all right; if it aint the custom it's all wrong, and Master Landell and the Don, who are close behind, might think it queer."

"We've just had a narrow escape from a most horrible death, Tom," I exclaimed, hastily. "Thank you for your warning."

The next moment voices were audible. There was the rustling of the foliage, and, as Lilla stood pale and leaning heavily upon my arm, my uncle and Garcia came hastily into sight.

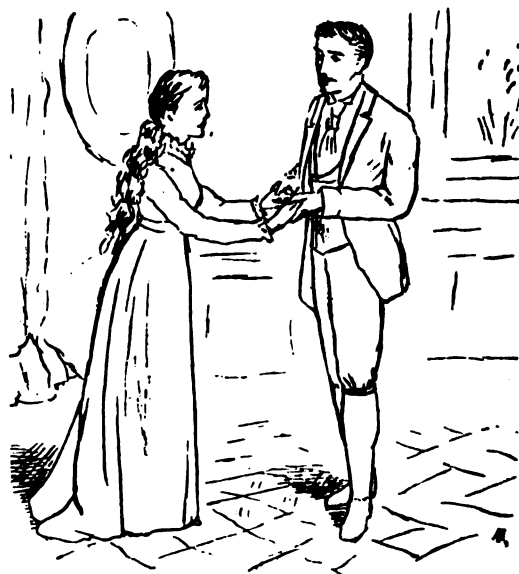
CHAPTER XI.—TROPHIES.

I HAVE seen some villainous-looking countenances in my time, but none more abhorrent of aspect than was that of Pablo Garcia, as, distorted with rage, he started on seeing Lilla resting half supported by me. The handsome regularity of his features seemed then to have the effect of making the distortion more striking. There was an angry frown, too, upon my uncle's face as he strode up; and, almost roughly, taking Lilla from me, he exclaimed hoarsely—

"Harry, after what I said, I did not expect this."

"It was quite by accident we met, uncle. Lilla has had a terrible shock," I exclaimed, hastily. "A hideous serpent—terrible conflict—"

I stopped short, for there was a sneering grin of disbelief on Garcia's countenance, which made me want to dash my fist in his face, as he said—



"Very terrible conflict—a very dragon attacking the maiden, and this new St. George of England coming to her rescue. I don't see any blood about."

"I should like to make some come from your nose, young man," muttered Tom, audibly.

"What was it all?" said my uncle, frowning; for he did not seem to like Garcia's allusion.

And then Lilla spoke in faint, trembling tones.

"I was resting after gathering those flowers, when a rustling overhead took my attention, and—ah!—"



She shuddered, turned pale, and covered her face with her hands, quite unable to proceed, when my uncle turned to me, and I explained what I had seen, in proof of which I turned to the beaten-down foliage, upon which lay thickly, in spite of Garcia's words, fast-drying spots and gouts of blood, which we traced right down to the river's bank, in a dense bed of reeds, where they ceased, and it was not thought advisable to search farther.

"Let us get back, my child," said my uncle, tenderly, to Lilla. "You must come alone into the woods no more."

There was a troubled and meaning tone in my uncle's words, and more than once I caught his eye directed at me. But directly after he moved off towards the hacienda, closely followed by Garcia, while I hung back, undecided how to act; for I was suffering from a troubled conscience as I thought of the promise given to my uncle.

My reverie was interrupted by Tom, who had been unnoticed, and had coolly filled his pipe and begun to smoke.

"Did you see Muster Garcia, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, "how he showed you the whole of his teeth, just like a mad dog going to bite?"

"No, Tom, I did not take particular notice of him," I said.

"Well, I did, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, "and if you take my advice you'll look out; for they're a rum lot here, as you know. They don't hit with the fist, only when that there fist has got an ugly-looking knife in it, sharp as a razor; and when they hit a poor fellow with it, and he dies afterwards, they don't call it murder—they call it fighting—a set of

uncultivated, ignorant savages! I only wish I had the teaching of them! But look here, Mas'r Harry, you'll take care, won't you?"

"Why, Tom?" I said, dreamily.

"Why, Mas'r Harry? Why, because Muster Garcia don't like you not a bit. That's all."

I shrugged my shoulders.

"Ah, you may hyste your shoulders till you skretches your ears with them, Mas'r Harry; but that don't make no better of it. I promised your mother as I'd take care of you and stick to you; but how am I to do that if you get yourself spoiled somehow or other? But, say, Mas'r Harry, was it such a werry big 'un?"

"Was what a very big one?" I said, wonderingly.

"Why, the sarpint—that might have been a sea-sarpint, for nobody seemed to believe in it."

"Yes," I said, moodily, "an enormous beast."

"And he got it pretty hot from the tiger thing?"

"You saw the blood about, and now hold your tongue."

"But I aint done yet, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, eagerly. "That there Don wouldn't believe in it, and we knowed that it went into that brake. What do you say to going up to the house, getting the guns, and then shooting the beast and skinning him, so as to show them that English lads don't go bouncing and swelling about without they've got something to bounce and swell about."

There was something in Tom's project that interested me, and I turned to him with eagerness. Adventure—something to prove that I had been no boaster—something to divert the current of my thoughts: it was the very thing; but I said, gloomily, the next minute—

"We should be too late, Tom; the beast must have taken to the river."



"All wounded beasts make to the water, Mas'r Harry," said Tom; "but we don't know that we should be too late. What I say is, let's try."

"Come along, then," I said.

And we walked up to the hacienda, encountering Garcia on the portal, ready to bestow upon us both a sneering grin, as we again issued forth, each carrying a double-gun, loaded with buck-shot.

I don't think we either of us stopped to consider whether it was prudent to run the risk before us, with a very problematic chance of success; but, hurrying back, regardless of the sun, we soon stood once more by the fallen tree, and began to follow the beaten track left by the contending enemies, till we reached the great brake by the riverside, when, for the first time, we turned and looked at each other.

"Oh, it's all right, Mas'r Harry," said Tom; "and if he's in here, we'll soon rouse him out."

For it was evident that he had interpreted the doubt that had found a home in my mind.

"You think it will be here still?" I said.

"Sertain, Mas'r Harry; and—hist! don't speak above a whisper. He's in there, sure enough; for look there at those monkeys: they aint chattering and swinging about there for nothing."

In effect, a family of monkeys were aloft howling and making a deafening din, and I could not help thinking, with Tom, that it meant the presence of enemies.

"Look out!" I shouted the next minute to Tom; for a huge crocodile, that we had passed unseen sleeping amongst the dank herbage, had apparently awakened to the belief that we were trying to cut off its retreat, and charging down straight at Tom, in order to reach the river, it was only by a grand display of activity, that might have been learned of the monkeys above us, that he avoided the onslaught, and the next minute the hideous reptile had disappeared from sight, but we could hear his rustling, onward progress, followed by a heavy splash, one or two ominous growls, and the increased activity of the monkeys, showing that our ideas with respect to these latter were not without basis.

"I tell you what, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, as he stood mopping the perspiration from his face, "them ugly beasts have got a spite against me—I know they have; and if I'm lost, mind this, I'm swallowed down by one of those brutes—I know I am, so mind that; and if you do go home without me, tell Sally Smith that I was swallowed by a crockey-dile, and all for love of she. Now, Mas'r Harry, I'm ready if you are. Let's both keep together, tread softly, and take good, steady aim before we fire; for this aint like putting a handful of oats in the snow in our yard, and then shooting at cocksparrers. If we hit what we've come after, mind, 'twill be something to put in the bag."

I was now as excited as Tom, and together we stepped slowly on through the dense brake, parting the heavy growth with the barrels of our guns, as we trod lightly over the swampy ground, which sent up a hot, stifling, steamy exhalation.

Yard after yard we pressed on, watchful ever; but though the track was plain enough, the elastic water grasses had sprung back, so as to thoroughly impede our view; and we knew that at any moment we might be ready to plant our feet upon the wounded monster we sought.

Twice over little alligators went scuttling from

beneath our feet, at the last time drawing forth an imprecation from Tom; and then we stopped short, with our guns at our shoulders; for Tom's utterance was followed by a warning shriek from the monkeys, and then, as that ceased, came a low, fierce, snarling growl from apparently just in front.

"What shall we do?" I thought.

And for a moment I felt disposed to try and get round some other way; but the slightest movement now was sufficient to bring forth a growl from our invisible enemy, and it was very plain now that we had tracked the jaguar to his lair, while the boa had escaped.

To have retreated would have been to bring him down upon us; so, after a glance at Tom's resolute face, I made a sign, and we took a step in advance.

Only one: we had time for no more, for, with a savage yell, the jaguar bounded right at Tom from the opening we just obtained a glimpse of; and it was like firing at a streak of something brown passing rapidly through the air, but fire I did, both barrels almost simultaneously; and the next moment Tom was knocked down, and the jaguar had disappeared amongst the reeds we had but just passed.

"Are you hurt, Tom?" I cried, anxiously, as I stooped to secure his undischarged gun.

"Hurt!" he exclaimed, angrily—"of course I am! Just see if you could have one of them great cats fly at you and knock you over without being hurt! But I aint killed, Mas'r Harry," he said, rising and shaking himself. "Them as is born to be hanged won't never be drowned; and them as is born to be swallowed by crockeydiles won't never be torn to pieces by wild cats. Look out, Mas'r Harry! Give it him again!"

At that moment, snarling and lashing its tail from side to side, as it showed us its white teeth, the jaguar now crept back, cat-like, on its belly, as if about to spring, when, with the best aim I could, I gave it both barrels of Tom's gun, and with a convulsive bound the brute rolled over, dead.

"That's hotter than the country, Mas'r Harry!" said Tom. "But we killed him, anyhow; so now load up. But, my! Mas'r Harry, what a beauty! And did you see when he showed his teeth?—he was the very image of the Don!"

I did not reply to Tom's query; but as I reloaded I could not help admiring the glossy, spotted coat of the great beast I had just slain—a brute whose activity and power must have been immense.

But we had not performed the task we had come to complete. This was something upon which I had not counted; and now, though quite satisfied in my own mind that the serpent had escaped, we left our conquered assailant, and once more began cautiously to pursue the track with guns pointed in advance, but without the expectation of a fresh assault, when, as if determined to be first this time, Tom suddenly fired at an upraised, threatening head, and it fell upon the monstrous, helpless, writhing coils of the immense serpent.

For it was evident that here the reptile had become too exhausted to continue its retreat, and Tom had administered the *coup de grâce*.

It was almost an unnecessary shot, for the jaguar

had terribly mangled the serpent, which was half-torn and bitten through in one place where it had been first seized; but even now I felt a strong desire to fire myself, as I saw a hideous coil rise slowly and then fall motionless, while for the first time the monstrous proportions of the creature became apparent.

"Don't stir, Mas'r Harry!" cried Tom, triumphantly. "Keep watch over 'em, or some one else will swear as he did it. I'll be back in less than half an hour."

And before I could utter a word of remonstrance, Tom had dashed off, leaving me to my loathsome wardership. But not for long; he was soon back with four Indians, giving his orders lustily, and we stood and looked on while they skinned the trophies.

"Perhaps they'll believe you now, Mas'r Harry," said Tom. "We'll take the skins up in triumph, that we will! But who'd ever have thought of my coming out here to shoot adders a hundred foot long?"

"Say five hundred, Tom," I said, laughing.

"Well, aint he, sir?" said Tom, innocently.

For from the effect of his elation it is probable that his eyes magnified; for upon the skin being stretched out and measured it proved to be exactly twenty-nine feet three inches in length, while the beast's girth was greater than the thigh of a stout, well-built man.

But at last, with our trophies borne in front, we made our way back to the hacienda, the Indians shouting, and the whole of the work-people turning out to welcome us. But though my uncle expressed pleasure, and took the first opportunity of telling me that he had never for an instant doubted my word, it was plain enough that he was constrained in his manner; while as to Pablo Garcia, I believe that a blow would not have given him greater offence than did this proof which I forced upon him of the truth of my assertions.

CHAPTER XII.—GOLDEN DREAMS.

I COULD not see Lilla alone, and I knew that I had no business to do so after what had passed, and a fierce struggle took place at that time between love and honour; but all the same, that sweet hope kept on shooting in my breast, so that at last I could feel how little nursing it required to make it blossom forth into a flower, to my thinking, ten thousand times more beautiful than any of those growing beneath the tropic sun.

But once I saw her alone, and then the encounter was not of my seeking. She came up to me, though, with a sweet, sad expression in her face, and a trusting look in her eyes that made my heart bound as she laid her hands in mine, and thanked me for what she called my gallantry; and I was so taken up by her words that I hardly noticed the scowl Garcia gave as he came in. In fact, just then my heart felt so large that in my joy I could at that moment have shaken hands with him so warmly that I could have made the bones of that fishy fin of his crack again.

But there was no handshaking: Garcia walking to the window and lighting a cigar, while Lilla

hurried from the room, as was now her custom when Garcia came.

The first flush of joy passed, and I was alone with the half-breed, to feel how impossible any friendly feeling was between us; and seeing that he was disposed to do nothing but stare at me in a half-sneering, half-scowling fashion, I strolled out, paying no heed to the burning sun as I made for the woods, where the trees screened me; and then on and on I went, mile after mile, through the hot, steamy twilight, amidst giants of vegetation hoary with moss. Beast or reptile, harmless or noxious, troubled me little now, for I was in pursuit of the golden idol of my thoughts, winning it from its concealment, and then, with everything around gilded by its lustre, living in a future that was all happiness and joy.

But I was not always dreaming. At times I searched eagerly in places that I thought likely to be the homes of buried Peruvian treasure; without avail, though, for I had no guide—nothing but tradition and the misty phantoms of bygone readings.

To the people at the hacienda my wanderings must have seemed absurd; for though I took my gun, I never brought anything back. This day game was in abundance, but I did not heed it—only wandered on till I came to a rugged part of the forest far up the mountain side, and seated myself on a lump of moss-grown rock in a gloomy, shady spot, tired and discouraged with the thought that I was pursuing a phantom.

What should I do, then? I asked myself. Go, as my uncle advised, to Texas? That meant separation; and yet I knew that I could not stay, and, in spite of all my golden hopes, the future looked very blank to me. I kept putting it off, but it would come. I must look the difficulty in the face—the end must come; and I laughed bitterly as I thought of my prospect—even if such treasures as I had heard of did still exist—of finding either of them in the vast wilds spread for hundreds of miles around.

My meditations were interrupted by the sharp crackle made by a dry twig trampled upon by a foot; there was a rustling noise close behind me; and as I turned I became aware of a face peering out at me from a dense bank of creepers, and a voice whispered—

"Is your gun loaded, Mas'r Harry?"

"You here, Tom?" I exclaimed.

"Course I am!" said Tom, indignantly. "What else did I come out here for, if it wasn't to take care of you? And a nice game you're carrying on—playing bo-peep with a fellow! Here you are one minute, and I says to myself, 'He won't go out this morning.' Next moment I look round and you're gone! But this here sort of thing won't do, sir! If you're going on like this, I shall give notice to leave, or else I shall never get back alive."

"Why not?" I said, laughing at his anxious face.

"'Cause of these here rambling ways of yours, sir."

"And if I take care, pray what danger is there in them, Tom?"

"Care—care?" echoed Tom. "Why, that's what you don't take, sir. I'm 'care,' and you leave me at home. You don't say, 'Come and look after

me, Tom,' but go on trusting to yourself, while all the time you're like some one in a dream."

"But what is there to be afraid of, Tom?"

"Sarpints, sir!"

"Pooh, Tom! We can shoot them, eh? even if they are a hundred feet long! Well, what else?"

Tom grinned before he spoke.

"Jaggers, sir!"

"Seldom out, except of a night, Tom."

"Fevers, sir!"

"Only in the low river-side parts, Tom. We're hundreds of feet above the river here."

"Snakes in the grass, sir!"

"Pooh, Tom! They always glide off when they hear one coming."

"Not my sort, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, in an anxious whisper. "They're a dangerous sort, with a kind of captain, and he's a half-breed. If you will have it, and won't listen to reason, you must. Mas'r Harry, there's snakes in the grass—Indian-looking chaps, who watch your every step, sir. You haven't thought it; but I've always been on the look-out, and as they've watched you, I've watched them. But they got behind me to-day, Mas'r Harry, and saw me; and I don't know what to think—whether Muster Garcia has sent 'em, or whether they think you are looking for anything of theirs. You don't think it, Mas'r Harry, but at this very minute they're busy at work watching us."

I started slightly at one of his remarks, but passed it off lightly.

"Pooh, Tom!" I said. "Who's dreaming now?"

"Not me, Mas'r Harry. I was never so wide awake in my life. I tell you, sir, I've seen you poking and stirring up amongst the sticks and stones in all sorts of places, just as if you was looking for some old woman's buried crock of crooked sixpences; and as soon as you've been gone, these Indian chaps have come and looked, and stroked all the leaves and moss straight again. You're after something, Mas'r Harry, and they're after something; but I can't quite see through any of you yet. Wants a good, stout, double-wicked six held the other side, and then I could read you both like a book."

"Nonsense, Tom—nonsense!" I said; though I felt troubled, and a vague sense of uneasiness came over me.

"P'raps it is nonsense, Mas'r Harry—perhaps it aint. But this here aint old England, so don't you get thinking as there's a policeman round every corner to come and help you, because there aint, no more than there's a public-house round the corner, to get half a pint when a fellow's tongue's dried up to his roof. So now let's understand one another, Mas'r Harry. You've got to keep close up to the house."

"Nonsense!" I exclaimed. "What good would that do? Look here, Tom, my good fellow: I know you are faithful and true-hearted, but you have been following me about till you have found a mare's nest, and seen an enemy in every Indian. You must learn to keep your place, Tom, and not to interfere."

Tom did not answer—he only looked sulky. Then, spitting in his hands, he rubbed them together,

crawled out of the bush, stood up, let his gun fall into the hollow of his arm; then thrusting his hands into his pockets, he stood looking at me, as if prepared for the worst.

"Going any farther, Mas'r Harry?" he said, as I rose.

"Yes," I said, "I'm going up this gorge."

And with him closely following, I climbed on till we were in a vast rift, whose sides were one mass of beautiful verdure, spangled with bright blossoms. High overhead, towering up and up, were the mountains, whose snow-capped summits glistened and flashed in the sun, while the ridges and ravines were either glittering and gorgeous or shadowy and of a deep, rich purple, fading into the blackness of night.

I stopped gazing around at the platform above platform of rock rising above me, and thought of what a magnificent site one of the flat table lands would make for a town, little thinking that once a rich city had flourished there. Even Tom seemed attracted by the beauty of the scene, for he stood gazing about till, seeing my intent, he came close behind me again; and together, with that traveller's love of treading the fresh and untried soil, we pressed on, climbing over loose fragments of rock, peering into the stream that bubbled musically down the bottom of the gorge, wending our way through the high growth of long tangled grass, till the gorge seemed to plunge into darkness, a huge eminence blocking the way, in whose face appeared a low, broad archway, forming the entrance to a tunnel, leading who could tell where?

Any attempt to follow another track was vain, as I soon perceived; for, as I saw, the gorge seemed to be continued beneath the archway, while right and left the rock was precipitous beyond the possibility of climbing even to the shelves, where ancient trees had securely rooted themselves in the sparse soil, to hang over and lend their gloom to the sombre scene.

But in spite of its mystery, there was a something attractive in the vast cavern, from which it now became evident the little river sprang; for it ran trickling out beneath the rocks we clambered over, till we stood gazing in towards the shadowy depth, listening to strange echoes of a murmuring rising and falling sound that dominated over all the faint whispers that escaped, as it were, from time to time to the light of day.

"What do you think of this, Tom?" I said, after vainly trying to see the cavern's extent.

"Think, Mas'r Harry? Why, it looks to me like the front door to Bogylund. But do let's get back, sir; for I was never so hungry before in my life. But stop, pray, Mas'r Harry—what are you going to do?"

"Do? Why, go in and explore the place, to be sure, Tom," I said, beginning to climb down the rocky barrier into the cavern.

"No, I say, pray don't, Mas'r Harry!" cried Tom, dolefully. "I aint afraid in the light, when you can see what you are doing; but I can't stand the dark now. Don't go, Mas'r Harry. Think of what your poor mother would say."

"Hold your tongue, will you, you great calf?" I exclaimed, angrily.

For an intense desire seemed to come over me to explore this dim, shadowy region. For what might we not find there treasured? It might be the antechamber to some rich, forgotten mine—one of the natural storehouses from which the old Peruvians had been used to extract their vast treasures. There were riches inexhaustible in the bowels of the earth, I knew, and if this were one of the gates by which they could be reached, held back from causes induced by cowardice I would not be—I had too great a prize to win.

But before I had descended this natural barrier to the entrance, reason told me that I must have light, and provision, and strength for the undertaking; and at that time I had neither. I had been walking for hours in an enervating climate, and was pretty well fatigued. There was nothing for it then but to listen to the voice of reason, as personified by Tom; and with a sigh I climbed back just as he was going to join me.

I saw plainly enough that it must be nightfall before we could reach home; and, getting free of the rocks, I was musing, and wondering whether, after all, I had hit upon a discovery, when Tom whispered to me, with averted head, to look to the right under the trees.

I did so, and became aware of a shadowy figure slinking off amongst the bushes; but I took little heed of it then, trudging on as fast as the nature of the ground would allow; and at last, thoroughly worn out in body, but with my imagination heated, I reached the hacienda.

That evening, when I was alone with my uncle, I mentioned my discovery, and asked him if ever the cavern had been explored.

"Never that I am aware of, Harry," he said, quietly; "and I don't think it would profit much the explorer. I have heard of the cave: it is a sort of sanctified place amongst the Indians, who people it with ghosts and goblins, such as they know how to invent. Let me see, what do they call the place in their barbarous tongue? Ah, I remember now—Tehutlan. I had forgotten its very existence. One of the old Peruvian gods used to live there in olden times, I believe, as a sort of dragon to watch over the hidden treasures of the earth. You had better search there and bring some of them out, or catch the dragon himself; he would make your fortune as an exhibitor in New York."

"And you think, uncle, it has never been explored?" I said, without replying to his last remark.

"My dear boy, for goodness' sake give up dreaming and take to reality," he said, pettishly. "Explored? Yes. I remember how they say the Spaniards explored it, and butchered a lot of the poor Peruvians there like so many sheep; but they found nothing. Don't think about treasure-seeking, Hal—it's a mistake; fortunes have to be made by toil and scheming, not by hap-hazard proceedings; but all the same, I must say," he added, musingly, "they do tell of the golden ornaments and vessels of the sun worship hidden by the poor conquered people ages ago to preserve them from their greedy conquerors.

Their places are known even now, they say, having been handed down from father to son."

"But did you ever search?" I said, eagerly.

"Who? I? Pooh! Nonsense, Hal! My idea always was that gold was to be grown, not searched for; but after all, I might just as well have gone upon a harum-scarum gold hunt as have sunk my few poor hundreds here."

The conversation was directly changed, for Garcia came in to take his evening cigar with the family, looking the while dark and scowling; but it had little effect upon me, for my thoughts were running upon the dim, mysterious cavern, with its echoes and shadows; and the more I thought, the more it seemed possible that a natural or an artificial discovery might there be made. By artificial, I meant the finding of a buried treasure. With the old profusion of gold in the land, there must have been some rich mines. Why might not this be one of them?

"Anyhow, I have nothing to lose," I said to myself; and at last I retired to rest, excited with the thoughts of Lilla and the riches I might find—the consequence being that I lay awake half the night, forming all sorts of impossible schemes; but above all, determining that, come what might, I would explore the great cavern of Tehutlan—if—

If what?

If I could find it again?

CHAPTER XIII.—BEGINNING TO "BURN."

THE sun was rising, and sending his golden arrows darting through the thick mist which hung over the plantation, as I went out into the court-yard, to find all still and peaceful, for work had not yet commenced.

I had taken the precaution of laying in a good supply of provisions, which I carried in a wallet, in company with flint and steel, matches, and several candles; for, instead of the morning light making my project seem absurd, I had grown warmer upon the subject, and come to the determination that if buried treasures had lain in the earth all these ages, I might as well become the owner of one as for it to lie there another century, waiting some less scrupulous searcher.

The night had not been passed without quiet thought, and I had come to the conclusion that if so much gold had been used for the embellishment of the various temples, and that gold had been hastily torn down and hidden, it would most probably be in the vicinity of a ruined temple.

But at this present time I was red-hot for exploring the cavern, which did not fit with my common-sense argument, without it should prove that there had once existed a temple somewhere on one of the platforms at the side of the gorge, when, if that should be the case, I felt sure that I had hit upon the right place.

What, then, was my first proceeding?

Evidently to search the sides of the ravine for traces of some ancient building.

Tom's words on the previous day had not been without effect. It was quite possible that I was watched, either by some spy of Garcia's, or, it might be, by some suspicious Indians who had seen me

searching about, perhaps, for aught I could tell, close by one of the buried treasures, of whose existence they were aware.

What a thought that was!—it sent a thrill through me, and roused me to fresh energy and determination.

Under the circumstances, and granting that I had been watched—the figure I had seen corroborating Tom's words—it was evidently my policy to get away unseen; and to achieve this I had risen thus early, swung on my wallet, and, armed with my gun, a hunting-knife, and a long iron rod, I walked softly round the house; but only to have my nostrils saluted by the fumes of tobacco, and the next instant I was face to face with Tom Bulk, leaning against a post and smoking.

"Startin' so soon, Mas'r Harry?" he said, quietly. "I thought you'd be in good time this mornin'."

And then, paying not the slightest heed to my discontented looks, he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, shook himself together, and prepared to follow me.

"But I don't want you with me, Tom," I said.

"Dessay not, Mas'r Harry; but I'm a coming all the same, and got my gun cleaned up ready."

I knew it was useless to complain—for Tom had already given me one or two samples of how obstinate he could be—so I made the best of it; and, knowing that he was as trustworthy as man could be, I trudged on with him close behind, hour after hour, till, after several wanderings wide of the wished-for spot, we hit upon a little clear, cold, babbling stream.

"I'll bet tuppence that comes out of that big hole," said Tom, eagerly.

The same thought had occurred to me; and now, just as I had given up all hope of finding the gorge that day, here was the silver clue that should lead us straight to its entrance.

The stream led us, as we had expected, right to the mouth of the gorge—that is, to where the rocks, which had heretofore been only a gentle slope clothed with abundant vegetation, suddenly contracted, became precipitous and broken up into patches of rich fertility and sterile grandeur.

But now these charms were displayed in vain; for the gorge being reached, I prepared to examine carefully its sides, and accordingly began to climb.

"Thought you meant the big hole, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, gazing uneasily about, and evidently seeing an enemy in every lump of rock or trunk of tree.

"Up here, Tom, first," I said.

And he followed me sturdily, without a word, up and up, and up, climbing over the precipitous sides, with tough root or fibrous vine lending us their aid, till, breathless, we stopped to gaze round or down into the rich ravine below.

Platform after platform I reached, and then peered about amongst the dense growth in search of some trace of masonry; but though again and again the blocks of stone wore the appearance of having been piled together, I could find nothing definite—nothing but that ever-recurring dense foliage creeping over and hiding everything, till we had panted up another

hundred feet, where a much larger table-land or platform extended before us.

My heart beat painfully now; for, judging from appearances, it seemed that if ever temple had looked down upon this beautiful little vale, this must have been the spot where it was piled. The cavern was sacred to a god; there must, then, have been some temple or place of sacrifice near at hand, it seemed, and I longed to begin investigating; but only to seat myself upon a mossy block, dreading the search lest it should prove unfruitful, and so dash my golden visionary thoughts. But at length I was about to commence, when a throb of joy sent the blood coursing through my veins, for Tom said, in his dry, ill-tempered way—

"Been some building going on here some time or another, Mas'r Harry."

I started to my feet then to find that the block I had used for my seat had once been squared for building; and, on peering about, there, in every direction, amongst creeper, moss, and vine, lay fragments of some mighty building. Some of the blocks were crumbling away; some square and fresh as if lately cut; and many of a size that was gigantic, and excited wonder as to how they could have been moved.

I was right, then. Here had once been a grand temple; and if its treasures had been hidden by the ancient priests of the place, where so likely a concealment as the mysterious cave, whose gloomy entrance I could just distinguish far off below us? The building must once have been grand, for every step revealed new traces, with the vegetable world completing the ruin commenced by man: mosses eating away, roots forcing themselves amongst interstices, and moving with mighty force stupendous blocks from their ancient sites.

"Yes, this was the temple. I was right so far," I exclaimed to myself. "Now, then, for the treasure! This way, Tom!" I exclaimed, turning to descend, eager now, and excited.

But the descent was steep at times, even perilous, though I heeded it not; and in less than half an hour we should have reached the stream meandering through the rugged bottom of the ravine, had not Tom, who was always on the look-out for danger, suddenly dragged me down into the shelter of a mossy boulder, and, in reply to my inquiring look, contented himself with pointing a little below us to the left, when, following the direction of his arm, it seemed to me that my secret starting that morning had been in vain. The golden treasure, if it existed, appeared about to be snatched from my grasp—my knowledge was about to be met by cunning, perhaps force. We were watched. Of that there was no doubt, and my heart sank with bitter disappointment; for there, where Tom pointed, plainly to be seen peering at us from a clump of verdure, was a pair of sharp, bright eyes, their owner being carefully hidden from view.

CHAPTER XIV.—IN SHADOWY LAND.

FOR quite a quarter of an hour we remained motionless—the watcher and the watched—Tom and I both well armed, and involuntarily our guns were pointed at the eyes; but the position was not

one which justified firing. The ravine was as free to the owner of those eyes as to ourselves, and, after all, we had no proof that this was an enemy.

I was in doubt as to our next proceeding, and had just come to the conclusion that our most sensible plan would be to turn back without going near the cavern at all, and so try to throw the enemy off the scent, for I felt certain that whether I discovered a treasure or no, I was on the right track, when Tom whispered eagerly to me—

"Let's show him that we know how to use our guns, Mas'r Harry. We won't shoot him, but only give him a start. Look at that: there's a poll-parrot—two of 'em—settled in the tree above him! It's a long shot, but I think I could bring one down; so here goes!"

Tom levelled his piece, and the next instant would have fired, when the parrots began chattering, screaming, and fighting together, fluttering down towards the bushes which concealed our watcher. Then there was a rush, a crashing of the undergrowth, and the owner of the eyes—a good-sized deer—bounded into sight for an instant, and then disappeared in a series of spring leaps, which soon took it out of sight in the dense growth.

"I *am* blessed!" exclaimed Tom, in accents of the most profound disgust. "If I'd known, wouldn't I have fired, that's all! Had some venison to take back, Mas'r Harry."

"I'm very glad you did not, Tom," I said.

For I felt how the report of a gun would have published our whereabouts, if there really were any lurkers near—a thing that I must say I now thought very probable, since the fact of there being a treasure in the cave, held sacred by the Indians, would, as a matter of course, render them very jealous of intruders.

"Where for now, Mas'r Harry?" said Tom.

"The cavern, Tom," I said.

And, finishing our descent, we were not long in reaching the rocky barrier, evidently piled by Nature at the entrance of the vast, frowning arch.

We stopped and looked around suspiciously; but the gorge was silent as the grave: not a leaf stirred; there was neither the hum of insect nor the note of bird. Heat—glowing heat—reflected from the rocks, already not to be touched without pain—and silence.

"Going in, Mas'r Harry?" said Tom.

"Of course," I replied.

"Very good, Mas'r Harry; if you will, you will. But if we get lost, and then find ourselves right away down in No-man's Land, don't you go and say it's my fault."

I was in no mood to reply, and, clambering up the hot rocks, with little glancing lizards and beetles rushing away at every step, we soon stood gazing in at the gloomy chamber, our eyes, unaccustomed to the gloom, penetrating but a few yards at a time, so that had there been a host of enemies within, they would have been unseen.

"Now, Tom!" I said, excitedly, as together we climbed down into the shade, to feel the cool and pleasant change from broiling heat to what was, comparatively, a very low temperature. "Now,

Tom, we are going to explore one of the wonders of the world!"

"Humph!" ejaculated Tom, who did not look at all pleased; "it's very big, and large, and cool. But say, Mas'r Harry," he exclaimed, brightening up, "it wouldn't make half a bad place for keeping tallers! Yah! what's that?"

"Only a bird," I said, as, with a rush, a couple of large birds had flown close by us, evidently alarmed at our visit to their home. "That's a good sign, Tom, and shows that you need not fancy there's an enemy behind every block of stone. If any one was within, those birds would not be there."

Tom grunted, and then, as if to show his unbelief, cocked both barrels of his gun, as, with eyes each moment growing more familiar with the gloom, we walked slowly forward into the darkness ahead—slowly, for the floor was rugged in places with fragments from the roof and stalagmite. The roof was about fifty feet above our heads, and the span of the low, corrugated arch, I should say, a hundred more than that. The stream was rippling noisily along, threading its way amongst the massive blocks of stone, murmuring musically over pebbles and sand. Now our way was wet and slimy, and then again rugged and dry, till, having penetrated some little distance with every precaution, we turned round to look back at the entrance, to see as pretty a picture as ever I gazed upon in my life. We could now see plainly the nature of the roof, hung with beautiful stalactites of many graceful forms, giving to the great arch the appearance of some grand specimen of Gothic tracery, through which we looked upon the ravine lit up by the outer sunshine, with its green, and gold, and blushing floral hues. It was a scene to be remembered for ever; but the gold in my thoughts seemed more glorious, and I turned from it without a sigh.

Another dozen yards, and a curve in the cave hid the entrance from sight; we were in gloomy shades, where a light was necessary; and before going farther I paused to think.

If the treasure had been hidden there, where would it be?

Reason said directly, in the most distant and inaccessible recesses of the vast cavern.

And where was that? How far from the light of day?

That was the problem I had set myself to solve, and, in spite of a feeling of awe with which the place inspired me, I prepared for the solution.

It was no light task, and I have no shame in owning that I felt a strange reluctance to proceed along a rugged path wherein might at any time be yawning some fearful bottomless chasm, ready to swallow up the adventurer; but I would not show my dread, and if Tom felt any, he was too obstinate to show his.

By means of string, we tied each a candle to our gun-barrels, and then set forward, walking slowly, now with the floor of the cavern ascending, now with it sloping down with a steep and rugged gradient, but always with the little river gurgling in darkness by our side, sometimes almost on a level with our feet; at others, where the path rose, run-

ning in a deep chasm, whose black darkness made one shudder.

We must have penetrated, I should say, the greater part of a mile, when the narrow, rocky shelf upon which we were walking came to a sudden end, and, holding down our candles, we tried to penetrate the depth before us; but in vain: we could only see a vast black abyss, over which we were standing upon a tongue of rock; while to right, to left, it was precisely the same—an awful falling away of all that was palpable—and we knew that a slip would have sent us to a horrible death.

"This is a fearsome, unked place, Mas'r Harry," whispered Tom; but his words went floating around as if taken up by a chorus of whispering, mocking voices, and a strange shudder crept through me.

It was indeed awful, that vast obscurity, with death threatening us if we took another step; and I could not help thinking how easy it was for a people of a low order of intellect, blindly superstitious, to make this solemn hall the home of their poor idol. It was a place that took no little courage to explore, and often I felt my heart fail me ere I recalled the errand upon which I had come.

Was it likely that, sooner than it should fall into the hands of the Spaniards, gold almost invaluable had been cast into this awful gulf? It was probable; but, as far as I could see, recovery would have been impossible, unless, after all, it was not so profound as the darkness made it appear. But then, how to descend? To swing by a rope over the fearful chasm would have unnerved the stoutest of heart, and I felt that I hardly could have dared such an adventure.

This, then, must be the extent of the cavern—or rather, of our power to explore it in this direction—for, as I have before said, we stood right out upon a projecting piece of rock, from which descent was absolutely impossible, and there was nothing for it but to turn back.

"Think it's deep, Mas'r Harry?" whispered Tom, loudly.

"Deep—deep—deep—deep—deep!" came whispering back from all sides, making Tom shiver; but he recovered himself directly, and taking a piece of greasy newspaper from his pocket, he loosely crumpled it together, knelt down close to the brink of the abyss, lit the paper, and then threw it from him to blaze out brightly, and fall down—down rapidly—as it burned lower, and lower, and lower, till, at a vast depth, it burned out, but without illumining anything. We saw no reflection from rocky point or gleaming water, and our feeling of awe was increased.

"I'll have another try, anyhow," said Tom. "Ears will sometimes tell us what eyes won't. Just lend a hand here, Mas'r Harry."

For a moment or two I shrank from assisting him, on seeing his object; but directly after applied one hand to a rough block of stone that lay at our side, weighing, I should think, a hundredweight.

We had about a couple of yards to move it, and then it rested upon the very brink, a shrinking sensation coming over me as I saw Tom stand, candle in hand, with one foot resting upon the rock ready to thrust it over.

"Now, then, Mas'r Harry," he said, "this 'll find the bottom, if anything will. We shall soon know now. Say when!"

I did not speak, for I was wondering whether that rough block was going down where that I coveted had been cast, and for a moment I was about to restrain Tom; but I thought that the fall of that stone would teach me whether the bottom was at an attainable depth or no, and I signed to Tom to thrust the fragment off.

"Over, Mas'r Harry?"

"Over!" I said, in a whisper; and the next moment there was a grating noise, and the stone had been thrust off to fall—fall—fall in silence, while, with awe-stricken countenances, we leaned over the gulf and listened second after second without avail, for no sound came up.

"It's gone bang through to the other side of the world, Mas'r Harry," whispered Tom. "There aint no bottom to this place; or, if it had been ever so deep, you must have heard it touch bottom some time. Aint it awful?"

It was awful, and a hand seemed clutching my heart as I thought of falling, ever falling like that, or of some enemy dashing me over into the fearful gulf. There seemed to be indeed no bottom within ordinary range, and the idea of descending by rope in search there of treasure was absurd.

How long the stone had been falling I cannot say; but just as we had given up all thought of hearing of it more, there came from the depths below a faint whisper of a splash, as of some pebble falling in water; but only for that whisper to be echoed and re-echoed from distant parts till it increased to a fearful roar that was some seconds in dying away.

It was impossible to help a shudder upon hearing those horrible reverberations, each one telling of the awful profundity of the place—one which, without extensive mining apparatus, I felt that any fathoming for search was out of the question.

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CHAPTER XV.—THE BLACK ARCH.



READFUL place indeed!

"They cannot have thrown any treasure down there," I mentally exclaimed the next moment. "It must be somewhere recoverable."

"Say, Mas'r Harry," said Tom then, "hadn't we better get back?"

"Are you afraid, Tom?" I said.

"Well, no, Mas'r Harry, I aint afraid; but I am nearer to being so than ever I was in my life."

"Taint fear, only one

of my knees will keep going shikery shakery, and my teeth have took it into their heads to make believe it's cold, and they're tapping together like the lid of a kettle in boiling time. But I aint a bit afraid."

"It's an awful-looking place, Tom," I said, "and enough to make any one shudder."

"Tis that, Mas'r Harry—'tis that indeed!" said Tom, earnestly. "And if I believed in ghosts and goblins, I should say as this was the shop where they were made. But—but, Mas'r Harry, what's that?"

I turned round hastily to look in the direction in which we had come, to see plainly a shadowy-looking form flitting, as it were, out of sight in the dim obscurity, and a feeling of tremor came over me as I thought of our peril should we be attacked now, standing, as we were, with certain death behind and on either side; and determined that, if we were to encounter an enemy, it should be upon less dangerous ground, I called to Tom to follow me; and holding my dim light well in front, began to retrace my steps in the direction of the entrance, when there was a loud echoing cry from behind; I felt a violent blow in the back, which dashed me to the ground; and in an instant our candles were extinguished, and we were in darkness.

For a few moments I felt paralysed, expecting each instant that I should have to grapple with an enemy; but save for the whisperings and the distant roar of water, all was silent, till Tom spoke.

"Have you got the flint and steel, Mas'r Harry?"

"Yes," I whispered. "But what was the meaning of that blow and that cry?"

"It was me. I stumbled, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, "for there was a black thing like a devil's imp flew up out of the big hole, and hit me in the face. But pray get a light, Mas'r Harry!"

That Tom's imp was some huge bat, I did not for a moment doubt; but after seeing a shadowy figure in front, I knew that it was possible that danger awaited us, so, hastily dragging flint and steel from my pocket, I was soon clinking away till a shower of sparks fell upon the tinder; the usual amount of blowing followed, and at last a match was fluttering its blue, cadaverous light, to blaze out soon and enable us to ignite our candles, now burned down very low, when, hastily pursuing our way, we came again without adventure into the great entrance, the daylight being welcome indeed when we sat down about fifty yards from the mouth to partake of some refreshments.

It is surprising what a tonic those provisions and a moderate taste of aguardiente formed. The daylight, too, lent its aid to restore the equilibrium of our nerves, and things wore an entirely different aspect.

"That must have been my shadow, Tom," I said, at last, just as he was indulging in a pipe. "Your light threw it on to the dark curtain of gloom before us. And as for your imp, that was a huge bat."

"Well, do you know, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, "I do begin to think that I hollered before I was hurt. But you know it really is an unked place in there, and wants a deal of getting used to, and I aint a bit used to it yet. But don't you make no mistake, Mas'r Harry; if you want to go in again, I'll go with you, and I can't say fairer than that!"

"Well, Tom," I said, thoughtfully, "I do want to go in again, for I'm not at all satisfied with my journey. I don't understand what became of this little river; for, of course, it must have turned off somewhere this side of the great hole."

"To be sure it did, Mas'r Harry; I saw where it went off under a bit of an arch, just before we got to that horrible great place."

"Then the cavern must branch off there, Tom," I said. "That must be the part for us to explore."

"Very good, Mas'r Harry, when you like; but in case of an accident, and I don't come out any more, I think I'll tell the truth before I go in: I said I wasn't, Mas'r Harry, but I was awful scared, and cold and creepy; but I think I shall be better this time; so when you're ready I am."

I expressed my readiness, and, in spite of fatigue, we stepped onward again, till the darkness compelled us to stop and light candles, when, knowing now that there were no very great perils in the path, we made far more progress, and in a very short time arrived at the spot where Tom had seen that the bed of the little stream took a fresh direction.

It was just as he had intimated: it suddenly turned off to the left, but beneath the shelving rock where we stood, holding down our candles as far as we could reach; and if we wished to explore farther, there was nothing for it but to scramble down some forty feet to where the water ran murmuring amongst the blocks of stone, here all glazed over with the stalagmitic concretion that had dripped from the roof.

I led the way, and with very little difficulty stood at last by the stream, when Tom followed, and we slowly proceeded along its rocky bed till, at the end of a few yards, we came to the turn, where it came

gushing out of a dark arch, some six feet high and double the width, the water looking black and deep as it filled the arch from side to side, running swiftly—a river of ink in appearance.

"Tom," I said, dreamily, "we must explore this dark tunnel."

"Very well, Mas'r Harry," he said, in resigned tones.

And when, a few minutes after, I turned to look at him, he was leaning against a rock, and removing his shoes and stockings.

"What are you doing?" I said.

"Gettin' ready, Mas'r Harry, so as to have something dry to put on when we come back."

"But I'm not going to try without boat or raft, Tom," I said. "We must give it up for to-day."

Tom said no word, but hurriedly replaced his extreme garments, and together we slowly made our way back to reach the light in time to see that the sun was very low down in the horizon; when, completely wearied out, we sat down to finish our provision—a very easy task, for I had only intended my store for one. But I must give Tom the credit of saying that he would not eat without much pressing, declaring that his pipe would satisfy him.

An hour after, we were making our way back to the hacienda, with, fortunately for us, a bright moon overhead; but it was nearly midnight before we reached the court-yard.

CHAPTER XVI.—THE RETURN TO SHADOW-LAND.

TOM was inexhaustible in his schemes, and at the end of three days he had contrived the very thing we required, in a light little raft composed of a few bamboo wands, confining together a couple of inflated calf or small heifer skins, which floated lightly on the river like a pair of huge bladders.

"There, Mas'r Harry, what do you say to them, eh? Let all the wind out and double 'em up, cut fresh sticks over there by the cave, blow the bags out again, and there you are, fitted up in style."

"Tom," I said joyfully, "you're a treasure!"

"Course I am, Mas'r Harry! And yet you wanted to leave me behind."

We were off the next morning before daybreak, and travelled as rapidly as we could, being pretty well laden; our load being increased this time by better illuminating powers, in the shape of rope thickly coated with pitch.

"You'll take the prog-bag, Mas'r Harry, as soon as we get there; and I've brought this bit of rope so as to sling the skin bags over my shoulders," said Tom.

And I nodded assent.

Having the advantage of a little more acquaintance with the road, we arrived at the ravine in good time, without seeing a soul, walked straight to the blocks in front of the great cave, climbed them, hastened in for some distance, and then sat down in the cool twilight to rest and refresh ourselves, the place being apparently just as we had left it some days before.

It was very laborious work that tramping through a trackless country, but an hour's rest and a hearty meal sufficed to make us once more eagerly set about our task, Tom now apparently as much excited as

myself, though without my deep interest. Tom's idea was that we might discover something wonderful—more singular, perhaps, than the vast chasm; but his fancies were exceedingly vague, while, for my part, I studiously preserved silence respecting my own intentions.

As soon as we reached the region of gloom, we lit a candle and our torch, but so far, with the increased power of thoroughly illumining the place, it only served to reveal the vastness of the awe-inspiring cave we were traversing.

Our progress was necessarily slow, but at last we stood over the arch from whence issued the stream, when, moved by a strange feeling of attraction, I left Tom busily preparing the raft while I walked forward with the torch, to stand at last upon the rocky cape projecting over the awful gulf, and there stood holding the light above my head, trying to penetrate the gloom.

But my endeavours were vain: above, beneath, around, the torch shed a halo of faint light—beyond that all was intense blackness, from out of which came the whisperings, murmurings, and roarings—evidently of water—but which the imagination might easily have transposed into the mutterings of a vast and distant multitude.

With an involuntary shudder I turned away, thinking of the consequences of a sudden vertigo.

Tom was busy with knife and rope, and, kneeling down, I helped him, puffing into the skins till almost breathless; but at last our task was done, and together we carried the little raft down to the water-side—though not without several slips—launched it, and then placed upon it our lights, stuck in lumps of clay brought for the purpose.

The raft was about six feet long by four feet wide; the skins supporting light sticks of bamboo well secured to them, and these in their turn bearing cross pieces laid in their places, so that the light vessel's deck, if I may call it so, was a sort of bamboo grating upon which we could sit, though standing would have been a puzzling gymnastic exercise.

We were ready, then, at last, but now the same feeling seemed to pervade both as we stood there on the rock, gazing before us at the black arch, through which, flowing easily, came the inky water. From where—from what strange regions?

CHAPTER XVII.—THE WATERFALL.

I DON'T think many could have stood peering into that gloomy tunnel without feeling something like a tremor of dread. However, I mastered it at last, after asking myself the question, was it wise to run such a risk? The answer came in the shape of gold—it might be the passage to traverse to arrive at inexhaustible treasure, and I turned to Tom.

"Are you ready?" I said.

"Yes, Mas'r Harry, I'm ready when I've lit my pipe," he said.

And coolly filling it, and igniting it from the torch, he stepped boldly on to the little raft, and took a bamboo—one of two cut on our way here—to pole us along.

I stepped on too, and the little raft swayed down heavily; but it was wonderfully buoyant, and, with

our lights in front, we prepared for our subterranean passage.

"All right, Mas'r Harry?"

"Yes," I replied.

And then we pushed off, poleing ourselves along under the arch, the rugged wall being easily reached on either side, the stream not being very rapid after we had passed the first dozen yards.

The navigation proved so easy that we were able to glance about at the sides and roof, which often nearly touched us, compelling us to stoop; while at other times the tunnel opened out, and we seemed to be making our way through a narrow lake. But it soon contracted again, and I should think our onward progress must have been through the damp, dark, winding way for quite a couple of miles, when, after seeing nothing but shining, glistening rock above us for hours, we seemed to have come to the end of our uneventful journey in a large, irregularly-shaped chamber, whose roof of veined rock was about forty feet above us, its length being about two hundred feet, and its greatest breadth about sixty.

The stream here widened out into a little lake again, leaving, however, on one side a sandy shore some six or eight feet wide. The waters were troubled as if in a state of ebullition, and for awhile we sat wondering and listening to a loud, moaning roar, coming apparently from a distance. Then, pushing on by the side, in a manner of speaking we coasted round the place till we reached the sandy shore and rested; for though the water flowed out through the arch by which we had entered, there was no way of further exit from the great vault.

This, then, was the extent of the cavern here, and it was with disappointment that I went slowly round once more, poleing the raft over the troubled waters, to find that there was no likelihood of a discovery here; the sandy shore was the only landing-place, and unless buried there, I could see no other spot where a search could be made. As to the lake's profundity, of that we could tell nothing, only that at every attempt to touch bottom we withdrew our poles with a shiver.

Here, then, was the source of the river, which rose from springs somewhere far below—springs which caused the bubbling we saw, making our little raft to rock terribly in one part we passed over; so that we gladly sought once more the sandy shore, and there remained listening to the lapping of the water, and the faint, distant roar.

"There must be another cavern beyond this, Tom," I said, after a thoughtful pause.

"Aint a doubt about it, Mas'r Harry," he replied. "It's my belief that if any one would do it, he might go on for ever and ever, right through the inside of the earth, to find it all full of places like this."

"Look!" I said, eagerly, as I stood on the sandy slip of land, and held up the light above my head, pointing the while to the end of the vault: "there's a rift up there, Tom, if we could climb to it; and that's where that roaring noise comes through."

"Mean to try it, Mas'r Harry?"

"Yes," I said, "if we can climb to it; otherwise we must come again, with something we can fit together like a ladder."

"Oh, I can get up there, Mas'r Harry, I know,"

said Tom. "I've been up worse places than that in Cornwall, after gulls' eggs."

Tom leaped ashore, and I gave a cry of horror, for the little raft was moving off; but, with a leap, Tom was back upon it, and drew it ashore by a piece of line, which he tied to one of the poles, after forcing it well down into the sand.

"That won't get away now, Mas'r Harry," he said.

And then, stepping cautiously along over the sand, which gave way and seemed to shiver beneath our feet, we reached the end of the vault, and, with very little difficulty, climbed from cranny to cranny till we gained the opening—a mere slit between two masses of rock—through which we had to squeeze ourselves, and then wind up and up, between block after block, that looked as though they had been riven asunder in some convulsion of nature.

Two or three times we were for going back, so arduous was the ascent; but, determined to see our adventure to the end, we pressed on and on, ever higher, till the noise became almost deafening; a cold, dank wind, too, made our lights to flutter, and once they threatened to become extinct. But, five minutes after, the passage widened, and the draught was not so fierce, while bright veins running through the rock at my side whispered of some rich metal or other for him who would venture thus far in its search.

"We're a coming to it now, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, shouting, for the noise was deafening.

And the next moment we were standing in a vast vault, stretching out as far as our feeble light would show us; while, about fifty feet to our left, in one black, gloomy, unbroken torrent, fell, from some great height above, a cascade of water—black as night, till it reached the basin below us, which, even with our trembling lights, shone forth in a silvery, iridescent foam.

We could hardly hear the words we uttered from time to time, but we felt but little inclination to speak, so awe-inspiring was the scene before us; and it was not until we had been gazing for some time that we ventured to climb down lower and lower, to find that the bottom of the cavern was a basin of restless water, from which it was evident some portion escaped, through a natural conduit, to the vault below, while probably the rest made its way to the vast gulf we had before seen.

Then up and down—now near the great foaming basin, then, with arduous climbing, close to the arch that formed the roof—I searched about, well aided by Tom, who seemed to think that I was looking for something precious, though he said nothing. At one time we approached so near the waterfall that we could distinguish, high up, the narrow archway through which it gushed. It seemed, too, that, by a little management, any one daring enough might have passed round the rocky amphitheatre in which we were, right beneath the waterfall, to the other side, where rifts and faintly-discerned chasms whispered of further wondrous passages unexplored. I felt sure—for the more I searched, the more the feeling came home to me—that we were the first human beings that had ever entered this stronghold of nature.

With the exception of the bright veins I have

mentioned, there was no trace of gem or precious metal. The sides and roofs sparkled and glistened again and again; but it was only with some stalactitic formation—beautiful to the eye, but worthless; and at last I felt that this was labour in vain—the treasure was no more here than in the vast chasm where we had hurled the stone; and, shouting to Tom my intentions, we stood and had another look, and then lit, upon a mass of rock, a large piece of oily oakum which we had brought for the purpose.

Our oakum burned brightly, but it was of but little avail, giving us not much more than a glimpse of the wonders of the grand chamber in which we stood; and then we turned to go, but only to encounter an unexpected difficulty. The chamber was so vast, and the rift by which we had entered the sloping side so high up, amidst crags resembling one another, that we had great difficulty in finding it; and I remember giving a shudder as I thought of the consequences of being lost there in the dark.

CHAPTER XVIII.—CAST ON A STRANGE SHORE.

BEING nervous, or wanting in nerve, is a state that would soon prove the ruin of the adventurous. We had to set ourselves determinedly to the task of finding our way back; and, after a weary climb, Tom pointed it out.

If anything, the descent was more laborious than the climbing up; but at last, tired out, we reached the vaulted chamber, with its troubled lake and narrow sandy strip of shore—a welcome place, gloomy and horrible as it was, for it meant rest upon our raft, and the gliding out with the stream to the entrance-arch, and then not so very long a journey to the blessed light of heaven.

“Ah!”

That cry burst from our lips simultaneously, as, climbing down to reach the sand, we held our lights low, to see—what?

That there must be a sort of tide in the lake, small as it was; for the water was bubbling up more fiercely, with a hissing noise, and there was no sand—the waters had covered it—there was no raft, the pole had been loosened by the water, and the raft had gone, floated away, to be driven by the stream to the tunnel, and then swim lightly away to leave us to a horrible death—a self-sought death; and as I thought of what I had done in my insensate greed for gold, I could have groaned aloud.

But no, it was no insensate greed, I told myself—it was for Lilla's sake; and my eyes filled with tears as I thought that I should never see her more, and that Garcia—

That name sent a thrill of energy through my weary frame, and calling upon speechless Tom, I told him to light a piece more oakum; and he did so, to reveal plainly the raft floating about right at the end of the great vault, and apparently nearing the arch of exit.

What were we to do?

There was but one answer. Dash into that horrible black lake and swim to the raft, or else stay and die.

It was dreadful: to plunge into those mysteriously disturbed waters containing far below who

can tell what hideous monsters?—to swim, or try to swim, where the strange eddies and whirlpools might draw the struggling wretch down! To swim, too, in profound darkness; for I felt that if the attempt were made it would be made together.

The thoughts in my breast must have been the same as those in poor Tom's; for, looking at the faintly discerned raft and then up at me, he said, with a groan—

“Mas'r Harry, I daren't!”

“Tom,” I said, “I dare not!”

“But tell me to try it, Mas'r Harry,” he cried—“order me to swim off to it, and I'll try. I shall be sucked down like a cork in a sink-hole, but tell me to do it—order me and make me, and I'll try; but I daren't go without I was made to do it.”

“Light another piece of oakum, Tom,” I said, hoarsely. “Perhaps the water on the sand is shallow, and we might walk along to the other end, and then try to swim together; it would not be half so far. But stay, hold my hand, while I step down and try.”

We crept down to where the sand had been bare when we left it, though loose and yielding; and, sticking the short pieces of candle in a crevice, Tom seized my hand firmly, and I stepped down into the water, but only to cry to Tom to draw me forth, for the sand was quick now and watery, and more dangerous to him who ventured upon it than the lake itself.

It was not without a sharp struggle that I once more stood beside Tom upon the ledge of rock, when, without a word, he drew out the oakum and prepared to light it, while, half beside myself with horror, I tried to calculate how far was the distance, and whether, by well marking the spot where the raft floated, we could not contrive to hit it in swimming in the dark. That we should have to swim in the dark I knew; for neither of us, I felt, could then have swum with one hand, holding a light above the troubled waters with the other.

Just then Tom's oakum blazed up behind me, to light up the vault, with its sparkling stalactitic roof, glistening sides, and strangely agitated water. There floated the raft plainly enough, just in front of the arch, and so near to our reach that in an instant Tom had thrown off cap, wallet, and jacket, beside the candles stuck in the rock and the still burning oakum.

“No, Tom—no!” I cried, catching at him; “you must not risk it.”

“Let go, Mas'r Harry—I must!” he shouted. “I swore I'd stick to you.”

He struck me in the chest, so that I staggered back; and then there was a loud plash, and he was swimming away.

To start up and throw off my own jacket and wallet was the work of an instant, for, with his example, I could not stay back. We were companions, and I felt that it would be cowardly, after he had taken the first plunge.

Another instant and I was after him, “plash!” with the noise of my plunge still echoing as I rose above the waters—echoing in a strange whisper along the arched roof. But oh! the painful, numbing sensation of intense cold that struck to my

heart! It was fearful; and, before I had taken a dozen strokes, I felt that I should never reach the raft.

I was not called upon so to do, for the next minute, in answer to my cry, came a groan from Tom, and I knew that he was swimming back, and the next moment he shrieked—

"Mas'r Harry, back! lend me a hand! Cramp—cramp!"

And then he gave a shriek of agony, which roused me to a state of frenzy, as I could just see him beating the water with frantic effort close by my side.

The raft was forgotten then, as with a vigorous stroke I reached him, placed one arm beneath his, and then struck out for the lights.

How I reached them I cannot recall: only a horrible struggle, the echoing of splashing water, the reaching of the cold, slimy rock with something seeming to draw me under, a fierce effort to get out, the dragging forth of poor Tom, who sank by my side with a groan; and then, in a dreamy state, I pulled the last piece of oakum from Tom's wallet, held it to one of the candles, for it to blaze up, sputtering loudly from the wet hand that held it. I sheltered my eyes after pressing out the water, looked again and again, separated the oakum so that it flared more and more, lighting up the low arch through which we had entered, when I groaned to myself: was this to be the end of my golden dreams?—death in this hideous vault; for the stream set swiftly now through the arch, and the raft was gone!

CHAPTER XIX.—A NIGHT'S REST.

THE bright, flaring, sputtering blaze, glimmering and flashing upon the troubled waters, and reflected from the roof; then, as it sank down, comparative darkness, for the two scraps of candle seemed to burn very dimly. Tom lay upon the rocks without speaking, while the agony that passed through my brain was intense. I felt that I had murdered the poor fellow, who was called upon to give up his young life through his fidelity to what any thoughtful man would call my wild follies.

We were to die, then, here, in this wild, mysterious cave, far beyond the reach of aid; for even if we had not by our caution thoroughly concealed our coming, who would dare to follow our route unless by chance the raft were seen?

That certainly afforded a faint gleam of hope, and another came directly to fortify it. My uncle had talked about the great cave, and its explorations had been mentioned. It was possible, then, that upon our absence causing uneasiness a search might be made in this direction; for I knew my uncle too well to think that he would leave his sister's child unsought for.

But if he did not arrive in time?—or if some of Garcia's spies had seen us enter, and were to mislead the searchers?

The thought was too horrible; and I shuddered as I thought of Lilla and her fate, till a maddening sensation of jealousy drove for a few minutes all fear and dread away.

My musings were arrested by Tom, who made

me start by suddenly taking my dripping hand between his—cold and corpse-like to the touch.

The next moment he was holding my hand to his breast, so that I could feel the laboured beatings of his true heart, as he exclaimed, hoarsely—

"Mas'r Harry, you saved my life then, and I'll never forget it."

"Nonsense, Tom," I said, with gloomy cheerfulness, "it's all give and take out here. Why, you saved me from the crocodiles."

"Cuss 'em! Don't talk about 'em here, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, in a whisper. "We don't know but what there's horrible ones living in these dreadful waters. That there cramp, taking me in the leg like that, made me feel as if one had got hold of me. I'm a horrible coward, Mas'r Harry, that I am."

"Tom," I said, "this place is enough to unnerve any one."

Then we were silent, for the strange echoings of our voices had an unearthly, terrible effect upon our nerves, and more than once I started at the grotesque shadow of myself upon the wall. The roar of the great waterfall came humming through the rift above our heads, while below the waters hissed, and bubbled, and lapped against the rocks in a curious, whispering, awe-inspiring fashion; and then, moved by the same impulse, we both took off and wrung all the moisture we could out of our things, before standing shivering before the lights, one of which was already beginning to gutter down and to threaten extinction.

Upon examining our wallets, we found that we each had a couple of candles left; but our provision was very low, and the question now arose as to the next proceeding.

"Won't do to lie down and die, Mas'r Harry," said Tom. "I'm ever so much warmer now."

"No, Tom," I said, "we'll fight to the last; but what are we to do?"

"Well, Mas'r Harry, I'd first of all get up into the crack of a passage up there, before the lights go out; for there's no knowing how high this water may rise; and if I aint to see daylight no more, but to die here, I should like to die dry and warm."

"Don't talk about death, Tom," I said, with a shudder. "Let's fight for life to the last, and, as you say, we'll climb up to the rift."

One candle burned out as we tried to move it, and deferring the lighting of another for reasons of economy, we climbed to the narrow crack-like passage, and went along it about thirty yards, before Tom, who was first, turned round in a part where the passage widened a few feet.

"Now look here, Mas'r Harry," he said. "We don't know that there aint no other way out of the cave. I should say as there is, if we could find it; 't all events, we mustn't lie down and die till we've looked about and the candles are burned away, and then felt about, till we can't feel no longer. So see here, Mas'r Harry, we're wet, and cold, and tired out, and we can't do nothing better than sit down here and have a good sleep. Then we'll wake up, eat the bit of grub there is left, and go to work again fresh. What do you say?"

"Say? That I think you are right, Tom," I re-

plied, trying to imitate his cheerfulness. "But about the light?"

"Light, Mas'r Harry? Why, we must put it out. We aint little children to be afraid to go to sleep in the dark. Then, you've got your tinder-box and matches all dry in the wallet, and we can light up and go at it again in the morning, or night, or whatever it is, Mas'r Harry, for there aint no difference here. Who knows but what, while we are looking for the way out, we mayn't find what you want?"

"What I want, Tom?" I said, suspiciously.

"To be sure, Mas'r Harry! What you want, whatever that may be—I don't say as it's gold mines, or dymons, or what not; only whatever it is, we *may* find it, for I shouldn't be surprised at finding anything here."

I did not reply; but, making the best of the sad lodging that was to be ours for the next few hours, and, all wet and shivering as we were, creeping together for warmth, we lay down, and I stretched out my hand to extinguish the candle.

But my hand was arrested half-way as I looked upon the glittering rock above my head, and listened to the hissing, seething noise of the water below us in the long vault, and the faint roar of the cataract far above us to the left. Now, with a sense of dread indescribable, I thought of the water rising to where we were during our sleep, and whether it would not be better to light another candle. Anything was better than lying there in the horrible darkness.

The spare supply of light we possessed, though, would be wanted after our sleep; and reluctantly I pressed down the wick, thinking, as I did so, what would be the use of the gold, if I found it now, and there should be no means of escape!

"What time would you like your shaving-water, Mas'r Harry?" said Tom, whose teeth chattered as he spoke.

"This is no time for laughing, Tom," I said, gloomily.

"I don't see as it's any time for crying, Mas'r Harry," he replied, "for I'm quite wet enough without that."

Then he was silent, and we lay in that awful darkness, which, in spite of my efforts, I kept peopling with multitudinous horrors.

Then I seemed to lose consciousness; in spite of hard rock, cold, and damp, sleeping heavily, and dreaming now of Lilla, who seemed to be in some terrible peril, from which I could not save her. I wanted to reach her, but something held me back, while the danger she was in, as it floated before my distempered imagination, was somehow connected with Garcia, and Indians, and fire, or a mingling of all three. I felt ready to cry out as I struggled against the power that held me back; but at last I saw what it was that stayed me: it was the gold for which I had been seeking—piled-up, heavy masses of gold—holding me down, crushing me, almost, while Lilla's sweet, imploring face was turned to me, as if asking my help. I strained—I longed to release myself, but in vain; and at last one great, ponderous mass began to move slowly, with a heavy, roaring noise, towards me, till it rested upon my chest, and with a start I woke, to find one of Tom's

arms thrown across my throat, and him snoring loudly.

For a few moments I lay aghast, unable to make out where I was; but by degrees recollection brought back all the horrors of our position, and, with a sigh, I managed to rid myself of Tom's arm.

I settled myself to try and sleep once more, so as to be ready for what would I knew prove an arduous, wearying task, tiring alike to body and spirit, when my blood seemed to be frozen in my veins, for there came a soft, fluttering noise, the air seemed to fan my cheeks as I lay, and then there echoed through the place three wild, appalling cries, followed by profound silence.

"Who's that a calling? It won't do, Muster Garcia? You left her to drown, eh? What! Hilloa! Say, Mas'r Harry, was I dreaming, or did you call?"

"I did not call, Tom," I whispered; "but there is some one in here besides us. Hark!"

Again, as I spoke, and heard plainly above the distant roar, three more cries came sweeping along, and once more there was silence.

"All right, Mas'r Harry," said Tom; "better chance for us to get out. If some one else can come in, that only shows that there's another way; and when it's time to get up, why, up we get; for I don't feel a bit disposed to try any more sleep here—it's too much like hard work!"

"I don't think the cries were human, Tom," I said.

"Never mind that, Mas'r Harry; they weren't ghosts' cries, I'll bet that. Now, if my old mother was here, she'd stick out as it was a spirit, as couldn't—Say, Mas'r Harry, though, what a horrid screech!" he whispered, as again a long-drawn, hollow, echoing cry ran through the passages.

I do not think I'm more timid than most men would have been at a time like this; but my hands trembled as I sought for the flint, steel, and tinder-box, anxious to be out of the darkness that hemmed us in on all sides; and it was not until I had tried for some time that I was able to ignite the tinder.

At last, though, the brimstone match was held down to the spot, glowing beneath my breath, the blue flame was succeeded by that of the wooden splint, and once more our spirits rose as the feeble light of a candle was reflected from the rocky walls.

CHAPTER XX.—THE AMPHITHEATRE.

WE were half numbed with the cold, but I found now that, in spite of our troubled dreams and its apparent brevity, our sleep must have been long, for our clothes were nearly dry.

"Now, then, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, "never mind no shrieks and cries—let's eat what there is in that bag, and drink what there is in that bottle, and then go on our voyage of discovery. It will give us strength for the job, besides being ever so much easier to carry. If anything queer comes near us, we've got our guns, so let them look out."

In spite of the feeling of tremor caused by the mysterious cries, I was eager enough to move, and we began to climb up once more through the crack, after stepping back to the vault, holding up our

candles, and making sure that by no possibility we had overlooked the raft.

As to its floating away, I felt that it would not go very far on reaching the end of the tunnel—there were too many obstacles in the way, in the shape of great boulders to block up the stream; so that hope of relief was but faint there, even if a search was commenced.

There was no raft in sight—nothing but the strange, troubled water, ever bubbling and leaping up; and with a shudder, as we thought of the struggle we had had, we turned away, but not without seeing that the sand strip was now about half-bare.

It was no time for being nervous. We knew that to live we must find a means of exit while our candles lasted, so we pushed on nearer and nearer, to find that, as we expected, we could pass right round behind the waterfall, over the slippery, wet stones, worn into seams, as if at one time the stream had rushed down them; but no trace of rift or passage could we find, save one small hole, through which it seemed possible that a body might be squeezed.

"Never mind, Mas'r Harry, that can't be the way; let's try farther round this other side."

Tom led now, and I followed, leaving the cascade behind us, and thoroughly examining the other side of the amphitheatre, but without avail; when we sat down, worn out, about opposite to the rift where we had entered, too disheartened to speak, till Tom said—

"We shall have to try and crawl through that hole, Mas'r Harry—there, under the waterfall."

"A dog could hardly do it, Tom," I said, bitterly, and then I started. "Stop a moment," I cried. "That was a regular crack or split in the rock that we came through, Tom; such a one as might have been made by an earthquake."

"Sure it was, Mas'r Harry; but you don't think as another one has come and shut it up, do you?"

"No, no, Tom," I cried, leaping up, and forgetting my fatigue; "but why should not that crack be continued on this side—here, just opposite, where we are? Come, climb higher with me, and let us have another try."

My thought was a bright one; for far up, just where the side of the amphitheatre began to curve into the dome which formed the roof, we found a crack answering to the one through which we entered on the other side; and squeezing ourselves through, we found that we were in another narrow passage—so narrow, though, that we proceeded with great difficulty.

"This must be the way out, Tom," I said.

"Or the way in, Mas'r Harry," said Tom; "one of them two. Anyhow, though, we shall soon see."

Not so soon, though, as Tom expected; for we crept on, and climbed for quite a couple of hours, winding and doubling about, before the rift opened out, sloping, too, at the same time, so that walking became out of the question, and we climbed slowly down till we lost sight of roof and sides. Then on and on, slowly and carefully, where a false step would have sent us gliding we knew not where; and then we stopped, aghast, with a fearful chasm

at our feet, to awake to the fact that we had climbed down to the extreme edge of an awful precipice, while, on holding up our lights, there before us was darkness, black and impenetrable, above, around, beneath.

The same thought occurred to both, and in a whisper we gave utterance to that thought together, though in different words.

"Tom, we've come round to another part of the great black gulf."

"Mas'r Harry, this is the same place where we pitched down the big block. Let's try another."

More to prove the truth of our thought than anything else, I assented; and finding a good-sized lump, Tom hurled it outwards with all his might, and then we listened as we had listened before, to hear it at last strike water at a profound depth, with the same roar of echoes to make us shrink shuddering back.

"It is the same place, Tom," I said, speaking hoarsely, for this was another damp to our hopes.

There was apparently no chance even of reaching the rocky point where we had stood the day before, for that point stood out alone, and I could not see how it could be reached; but, in a dull, despondent way, I thought that we would try to the last; and shrinking back a few yards from the edge of the precipice, we began to climb along the side, in the hope of finding some outlet in that direction; for could we but reach that point by any means, we were safe.

Ten minutes' climbing in a state of extreme horror, with the loose fragments of rock slipping from beneath our hands and feet, to roll rattling over the edge of the vast chasm, and then we were brought to a standstill; for there, right in front, was a bare, smooth, perpendicular wall of rock, inexorable as fate itself.

We turned, and began to climb back along the horrid slope, when, with a sensation of horror that I hardly dare to recall, I felt my legs slip, my hands, torn, wet, and bleeding as they were, to glide over the stone to which I clung; and, with a feeble cry for aid to Tom, I gave myself up for lost.

With a shriek like that which might have been expected to have emanated from some wild beast, Tom leaped to my side, caught at me, and then, clinging together, we continued our downward course for what seemed an interminable length of time, when there was a sudden stoppage. Tom's feet rested in a cleft of the rock, and he held me fast, as I lay gasping, with my legs hanging for some distance over the frightful chasm.

For full five minutes we did not either of us move, since it seemed that the slightest attempt to alter our position must result in a plunge into the darkness yawning to receive me.

One candle was extinguished, but the other lay guttering and flaring some twenty feet above us, wasting rapidly, and casting its feeble, weird light upon where we clung.

We neither of us spoke; but softly feeling about, I at length got my fingers in a chink of rock, which gave me courage to move my legs, so that at last they rested upon a rough point or knob. Then, by Tom's guiding, my other hand found a hole, and by

an effort I climbed on to the slope, to lie panting and waiting for nerve.

Help me Tom could not, from his position, and had I not stirred myself I must have fallen at last; but he had well paid the debt he owed me for my



last night's efforts, as I told him when we had cautiously made our way back up the slope, in a diagonal direction, to where the rift opened, to sink down at last, breathless and thankful, in the narrow way; glad even to be beyond reach of the influence of the horrible gulf which had for me an attraction that was appalling.

We were very quiet now, as we half sat, half lay upon the rocky bottom of the crack, till our strength was somewhat renewed after our late efforts, when, dragging myself up, I wiped the clammy dew from my forehead, and Tom followed my example.

"Tom," I exclaimed, "inaction means death. Let's try that hole behind the fall."

"Right, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, essaying to be cheerful.

And without another word he rose, took his candle from the niche in which he had placed it, and together we climbed over the blocks to behind the fall, where, going down upon his knees, Tom held his candle in at arm's length, and then essayed to creep in at the little opening.

I looked on anxiously, as his head and shoulders disappeared, then his whole body; and I was preparing to follow him, when he wriggled himself back, to face me with a sad shake of the head.

"No good, Mas'r Harry—a baby couldn't go through there."

I took his word, and led the way back till we were clear of the mist shed by the fall, and then I set to, to try if the great problem of our escape could not be solved; and at last, when all hope was ready to expire in my bosom, the solution came.

We were sitting, sad and dejected, worn by our long toil, when suddenly we were startled by a shriek similar to those which we had heard upon our awaking.

Tom pressed closer to me, and I must confess to a strange sensation of awe, as now one after another

these wild cries came ringing out of the darkness around. Now near, now far off, and fading away as it were, till one was uttered close by my ear, and I saw a shadowy form sweep past the light shed by our one poor feeble candle; then another and another; when, angry with myself for my superstitious dread, I exclaimed aloud—

"Why, they're birds!"

"Birds they are!" cried Tom, gently. "But are they real birds, Mas'r Harry?"

"Real, yes, Tom!" I exclaimed, excitedly. "And there must be some other way of entrance, for I saw one disappear close by the falling water. Yes, and there goes another!" I cried, as I held up the light. "Tom—Tom, they are the messengers of life! There is a way out yet!"

CHAPTER XXI.—A JOURNEY IN THE DARK.

AGAIN the hope which animated our breasts chased away the sense of depression and fatigue, as lighting our last candle, to obtain a better light, we clambered as rapidly as we could high up towards where the water came roaring out of its vast culvert, just as with a loud shriek a bird flew out, like some creature of shadow-land, from a niche which had hitherto escaped our notice.

The next moment, after a flit round the amphitheatre, it gave another shriek, and we saw it re-enter the niche and disappear.

That there was an outlet to the upper world there, we now had no doubt; but the question arose which exit presented the least peril—the ascent to this niche right over the arch of the torrent, or the way back by the vault of the troubled waters, to swim for our lives down the little river.

We did not pause long to consider, but, drawing our breath hard, sought to climb up to where the bird had disappeared.



We needed the activity and power of some animal born to a climbing life, for it was a terrible task, over slippery, spray-bedewed rocks, that seemed composed of ice. Our feet and hands slipped again and again, and more than once I felt that I must

fall upon the bow of that torrent of inky water, at first by our side, soon right beneath us, and so be plunged into the seething cauldron below.

I found myself wondering whether, if I did so, my body would be forced through along some sub-



terranean way, to the vault of the troubled waters, from thence float out slowly along the little river, and so to the mouth of the cave and the outer sunshine.

Such thoughts were enough to unnerve one; but, bit by bit, we climbed on in safety, handing the candle from one to the other, and ever and anon stretching out a helping hand, till, how I cannot tell, we clung at length right over the falling torrent, with a piece of rock, smooth as the polishing of ages could make it, between us and the niche, which now proved to be a good-sized split between a couple of rocks.

"You go first, Mas'r Harry," Tom whispered, with his mouth close to my ear. "I'll stand firm, and you can climb up my shoulders, and then lend me a hand."

I prepared to start, handing him the one candle we now had alight, when I gave utterance to a cry of despair; for the linen band which had crossed my breast, and supported the wallet, had been worn through by the constant climbing, and I suppose must have broken when I was making this last ascent. At all events, the wallet was gone—plunged, I expect, into the torrent, and bearing with it the flint, steel, tinder-box, and matches; so that, should any accident befall our one light, we should be in the horrible darkness of the place.

"Never mind, Mas'r Harry," said Tom. "It aint no use crying after spilt milk. Up you go, sir."

With failing heart and knitted brow I exerted myself, climbed to Tom's hips, as he clung to the rock and lighted me; then to his shoulders; stood there for a moment, trembling, and then struggled into the cleft, turned round, lay down in a horrible position, sloping towards the torrent, with my head

two feet lower than my knees, and then stretched out my hands to Tom.

"Can't reach, Mas'r Harry," he said, after one or two despairing trials. "You'll have to go and leave me. See if you can get out and fetch help."

For a moment I felt stunned at this unforeseen termination of our efforts, for there really seemed hope now, unless this fresh passage should prove too narrow to let us pass.

I did not answer Tom, but drew myself up again to think; when, taking off my coat, I rolled it round and round, laid fast hold of the collar, and then, once more lying down, I lowered the coat to Tom.

"Can you reach that?" I said.

"No, Mas'r Harry—not by a foot," said Tom, gloomily, his words being shouted, as the roar of the torrent beneath us swept his voice away.

He stood in a position of awful peril: a false step, and he would be plunged into the torrent; and as I looked down at his upturned face and the flickering candle, I wondered how I could have ever dared to stand there myself.

"Can you reach it now?" I said, lowering myself a little more.

And his answer came in a dull, muffled, despairing monotone—

"No."

I wriggled and shuffled my body a little more forward, forcing my boot-toes into a crevice as I did so, for it seemed that now the slightest strain would draw me over the precipice. But there was no other resource: Tom must have help; and I lay shivering there as, with an upward spring, the candle between his teeth, Tom clutched my coat, I shuddering the while, and wondering whether the cloth would give way, or whether I should be drawn down.

We were looking straight into each other's eye-



balls, lit by the guttering candle, while, with try after try, exerting the great muscular strength in his arms, Tom climbed higher and higher, till he could touch my hands, my arms, and then hold on by my neck, when he stopped, panting, just as, in his con-

vulsive efforts, his teeth met through the candle, ground through the wick, and the upper portion fell far below into the torrent, to leave us in that awful darkness.

"Hold fast, Mas'r Harry!" Tom hissed in my ear. "Crook your hands. No! clasp 'em together, to give me a foothold."

"Tom!" I groaned, "I'm slipping. I can hold on no longer."

"A moment—a moment, Mas'r Harry," he said.

And I clasped my fingers together, when, bending his body into a half-circle, he got one foot into my hands, forced himself rapidly up, staying my downward progress of inch after inch, as the weight of his body pressed me to the rock; but as he turned to hold me in his turn, it was just as I felt myself going faster and faster, gliding head downwards towards the torrent.

Another struggle, and, wet and bleeding, I was by Tom's side, for him to hold tightly by one of my hands, as with the other he felt his way along slowly for some yards, when once more we sank upon the rocky floor, to lie panting, our breath drawn in hysterical sobs, and a darkness around that was too fearful even to contemplate.

Our despair was such that we could find no words; but at last Tom said, in a voice that I could hardly hear for the roar of the torrent, which seemed to be here condensed by the narrow passage—

"Mas'r Harry, I'll go first; follow close behind, and crawl."

His words gave me energy, and we set off, crawling slowly, now upwards, now downwards, feeling every foot of the way, lest some new peril should lie in our path. The roar of the torrent rose and fell as we crept away, till by slow degrees it became fainter, fading to quite a soft murmur; but still no new horror assailed us. The dread darkness was forgotten in the hope that shed a light into our hearts, as foot by foot we progressed through what was sometimes a narrow passage, sometimes a wide vault, as we could tell by the echoing of our voices from its arched roof. In one of these, too, our ears were saluted by the shrieks of birds and the rushing of wings—a fact which told us we could not be very far from the light of day; but progress was so slow that I often despaired of seeing that light again.

Often and often I would have lain down and cried like a child, and it required no weak effort to keep my emotion back.

"Seems to me, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, at last, "this is a very big place we are in, for the more I try about, the less I seem able to get on. Shall we rest a bit?"

Had Tom said, "Shall we keep on?" I should have made the same reply—"Yes." And then, as we extended our aching limbs upon the soft soil which covered the floor of the cave in this part, a delicious sense of tranquillity stole over me, and almost instantaneously I sank into a deep, dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER XXII.—TO DAYLIGHT.

HOW long we lay in that stupor—more than sleep—I cannot tell; but I was awake by Tom, and once more we slowly continued our jour-

ney, walking now, though—for the absence of fresh perils had given us courage—and with our guns extended we went slowly on; but ever with the soft earth of the cave beneath our feet, and the stillness only broken by the occasional shriek of a bird.

"Say, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, after a long silence, "we are only wandering here and there without finding the passage to go out."

"I have been thinking so too, Tom," I said, as a thought struck me. Then loudly—"Look out, and see if you can make out anything when I fire: the flash may guide us."

Raising my gun, I fired upwards, when it was as if the whole cave were being crushed up together—thunder, roar, and bellow in a deafening series of echoes—echoes succeeded by the rustling as of ten thousand wings, and shrieks that were deafening—noises which were quite a quarter of an hour in subsiding.

"We must be near to an opening, Tom," I said, as soon as I could make myself heard.

"All right, Mas'r Harry, and I've seen it," he said, cheerily. "This is a big place, hundreds of feet over, but the passage out lies here; that flashing of the gun was a good idea of yours."

He took my hand, and stepped out boldly. Then feeling his way with caution, he exclaimed joyfully that he had found the opening, into which we stepped, and soon knew by the hollow sound that we were in a rapidly contracting passage.

From time to time I now flashed off a little powder in the pan of my gun, in which instant we were able to see that we were in one of the riven passages of the cave, similar to those which we had before traversed; and, faint with hunger, we pressed on, till a distant murmur, ever increasing, forced itself upon my notice, and in a voice of despair I exclaimed—

"Oh, Tom, Tom! we are going back, my lad!"

"Mas'r Harry," he exclaimed, "don't be downhearted. 'Tis so, though; and I've been thinking it for the past quarter of an hour, but I wouldn't say it, for I wasn't sure. Never mind, let's turn back. That's the big waterfall we can hear, sure enough. But we can step out bold now, as we know there's no danger; and when we are in the big place where we slept, a little powder will show us the way."

A weary walk, and we were once more upon the soft earth of the cave where we had slept—the bird-chamber, we called it—when, by means of flashing off powder, we arrived at a pretty good idea of the size of the place, and, better still, discovered a fresh outlet.

Danger and disappointment had made me now cautious, and I would not proceed until, by the expenditure of more powder, we had made sure that there was no other passage; alarming the birds, too, so that they swept round us like a hurricane.

"Right this time, Mas'r Harry," cried Tom.

And we were once more on the way, crawling as to pace, as we felt our way in turns with a gun-barrel.

"If it ever fell out, Mas'r Harry, that we wanted a hiding-place, what a spot this would be!" said Tom, little thinking that the day was to come when it should prove the salvation of those who were our

truest and best friends. "Why, I don't believe there's an Indian ever had the pluck to come a quarter as far, and we know it now well, every foot of it."

"Except the way out, Tom," I said, sadly.

"Ah, that's right enough now, Mas'r Harry," he cried. "Cheer up: here's the birds flying along by the score. Can't you hear their wings whistle? They're some of those we frightened out, coming back again."

I could hear the soft flap of wings plainly enough, and I could not help feeling hopeful, as we toiled on, till suddenly Tom exclaimed:

"Keep back!"

"What is it?" I exclaimed, our voices echoing in a way which told us that the cave had once more opened out.

"My gun goes down as far as I can reach here, Mas'r Harry. There's a hole of some kind. Stop till I flash off a bit of powder."

I stood firm, while Tom was busy for a few moments, during which I heard the click of his flask. Then there were sparks as he snapped off his flint-lock gun, but for a few times without effect; but at last he started a train of powder, which burned brightly, showing us that we stood on a ledge some fifty feet above where there was the flash of water and many a grotesque rock.

"Why, Tom!"

"Why, Mas'r Harry!"

"Down on your knees!" I cried, joyfully, as I set the example.

For we were in the first extensive widening out of the cave, at above five hundred yards from its mouth, having emerged through an opening hitherto unknown to us, from its being upon a ledge forty or fifty feet above the floor, where in that part it ran on a level with the little river.

We rose from our knees, weak as two children, and contrived to scramble down to the bottom, along which we stumbled slowly, without energy, towards the cave's mouth. Turn after turn, winding after winding, we traversed, and there was the faint dawning of light in the distance—light which grew more and more bright and glorious as we advanced, shading our eyes with our hands, till, utterly worn out, we sank down close to the entrance, amongst the soft, warm, luxurious sand, when I gazed at the pale, haggard, blood-smeared face beside me, to exclaim—

"Tom, is that you?"

"Mas'r Harry," he replied, hoarsely, "poor missus wouldn't know you if she was here."

It was the noon of the third day, we afterwards learned, that we had spent in these realms of darkness, and never did the bright face of Nature look more glorious than it did to our aching eyes. But, in spite of the intense sensation of gnawing hunger, we could not proceed till we had rested. Then, after bathing our faces, hands, and feet in the cold stream, we slowly journeyed towards the hacienda.

"Don't say a word about the cave, Tom," I said, as we neared home.

"No, Mas'r Harry, not if you don't wish it," he replied, looking at me wonderingly.

"I have a reason, Tom," I said. "We can say

that we have been exploring, and that will be true, and will satisfy them."

"You aint done with the cave yet, then, Mas'r Harry?"

"No, Tom," I said, "not yet."

CHAPTER XXIII.—A QUESTION.

THE look I received from Lilla that evening was one which, while it reproached me, made my heart leap. But all the same, I did not respond to it; I dared not; and I sat there answering my uncle's questions, and telling him of our discovery of the ruined temple, but no more; while Garcia, who was present, smiled a contemptuous smile that was most galling.

For that smile seemed to mean so much, and to say, "Look at this crazy vagabond, how he spends his time!"

I was too weak and ill, though, to resent it, and gladly sought my bed, which I did not leave for a couple of days, being tended most affectionately during that time by Mrs. Landell.

We had made our entrance to the hacienda by night, as I had wished, on account of our appearance, and it was well we did so, for an inspection of the clothes I had worn displayed such a scarecrow suit as would have ensured the closing of any respectable door in my face.

But if when I rose from my couch my clothes were worn, so was my spirit, and during the long hours I had lain there my brain had been as active as ever concerning the buried treasures.

The terrors of the cave were great, certainly; but then I reasoned that three-parts of them were due to ignorance. Had we been acquainted with the geography of the place, as we were now, and taken common precautions, we might have saved ourselves the hairbreadth escapes and agony of mind that had so told upon us—we need not have risked our lives by the great gulf, nor yet in the vault of the troubled waters. With a short, portable ladder and a knotted rope the ascent to the rift over the torrent in the great amphitheatre would have been easy. And altogether it seemed to me that another visit, well prepared, would not be either arduous or terrible.

The visit, of course, would be to search for the treasure; and calm reflection seemed to teach me that it was very probable that we had now hit upon the part that seemed likely to have been used for the purpose—so I thought. I could not feel that the timid, superstitious Indians would ever have penetrated so far as we did, but the soft earth of the bird-chamber seemed, after all, a most likely place.

"What! going again, Mas'r Harry?" said Tom, when I broached the subject.

"Yes, Tom," I said; "I want to explore this bird part of the cave. And besides, we need run no risks this time—we need not go into the terrible parts."

"Very good, Mas'r Harry; only reck'lect about the pitcher as goes so often to the well getting broken at last."

"But you'll go with me, Tom?" I said.

"Go with you, Mas'r Harry? Course I will! I should just like to catch you going without me. Don't you get coming none of them games."

The result of this was, that one morning, soon after sunrise, Tom and I were climbing over the rocks that barred the mouth of the cave. We had plenty of provision and plenty of candle. Each man, too, carried his own tinder-box and a small coil of knotted cotton rope, which served as a girdle, and so was not allowed to encumber our movements.

Light-hearted and eager, I led the way, and we pushed right in past the rift on the ledge which led to the bird-chamber, for we were anxious to see what had become of our raft.

It was just as I anticipated: we found it self-anchored between two blocks of stone, within fifty yards of the tunnel-arch; and landing it, we cut the leather thongs, let out the wind, and then hid the whole affair behind some rocks—in case, as Tom said, we might want it again.

A rest, and a slight attack upon the provisions, and we were once more journeying towards the mouth; but only to pause in the chamber where lay the opening that had saved our lives.

A little agility took us to the mouth of the rift; and now, candle in hand, we could see the passage through which we had travelled so laboriously, to find it the easiest of any passage we had traversed, the floor being deeply covered with guano, as was the case with the bird-chamber when we entered it at last, to find a vast hall of irregular shape, swarming with the guacharo, or butter-bird of South America—a great nightjar, passing its days in these fastnesses of nature, but sallying out at dark to feed. The uproar they made was tremendous, and several times I thought that our lights would be extinguished, though we escaped that trouble, and continued our search.

The floor was nearly level, and the roof, like the others in the cave, covered with stalactites; but the birds and their nests completely robbed the place of beauty or grandeur.

An hour spent here convinced me that we knew the two only passages leading from the place, so we continued our investigations, travelling along the farther passage, till the sound of the great waterfall smote upon our ears, but still nothing rewarded our search, though we went to the end.

A passage of the most rugged nature, but a passage only, with nothing in the shape of branch or outlet, save into the amphitheatre, into which we had no desire to penetrate. Certainly, the passage widened out into a chamber with glistening roof here and there, but with rocky floors, and presenting nothing striking as likely to reward my search.

At the end of a couple of hours we were back in the bird-chamber—I continue to call the places by their names that first struck us as suitable—when we sat down for another rest and time of refreshing, for we had no peril to dread this time; and now, once more, I began to think over, with damped spirits, the possibility of finding what might have been here concealed. Treasures, the wealth of nations, might have lain hidden for ages, with the guano continually accumulating to bury them deeper and deeper; but were they buried there?

I would try and prove it, at all events; and rousing myself from my musing fit, I took the sharp-

pointed rod I have before mentioned, and began to probe the soil, Tom watching me earnestly the while.

But nothing rewarded my endeavours. I probed till I was tired, and then Tom took up the task, but always for the rod to go down as far as we liked in the soft, yielding earth.

At last I told him to give up, for the possibility of success seemed out of the question. Fatigue had robbed me of my sanguine thoughts, and wearily I led the way back to the mouth of the cave, and we again had a rest, Tom lighting his pipe, and I gladly seeking the solace of a pipe.

Rest and refreshment had their usual effect, and I was soon up again and at work with the rod, thrusting it down into the sand all over the place, till in one spot it struck upon something hard, and my heart leaped; but a little tapping of the hard matter showed that it was nothing but a mass of rock, some four feet below the sand.

I sat down again, hot and ill-tempered, when Tom tapped the ashes out of his pipe, and stood before me.

"Now, what is it you are really after, Mas'r Harry?" he said. "Not gold, is it? Why don't you be open with a fellow?"

"What makes you ask, Tom?" I said, suspiciously. "Because they do say, Mas'r Harry, that the folks that used to live here got to bury their stuff, to keep it out of the Dons' hands."

Always the same tradition! But I made no answer, for a fresh thought had struck me—one of those bright ideas that in all ages have been the making of men's fortunes; and, leaping up, I seized the rod, and ran to where the stream, inky no longer, but clear and bright, ran, sparkling in the subdued light, over its sandy bed, towards the open sunshine.

Wading in, I turned up my sleeves, and began to thrust my iron probe down here into the soft sand; for I had argued now like this: that, after carefully considering where would be the best place to hide their treasure, the priests of old might have been cunning enough to think that the simpler the concealment, the less likely for it to be searched; and thus, with the dim, mysterious caverns beyond, offering all kinds of profundities—spots that could certainly be suspected—they might have chosen the open mouth, and buried that which they sought to save in the bed of the little stream.

The thought seemed to take away my breath for a few moments—it came so vividly; the next minute I was wading about, thrusting the rod down as far as I could in the wet sand; but always with the same result—the iron went down easily to my hand, and was as easily withdrawn.

I probed right in as I waded amongst the gloomy parts, and then went on to where it became dark; but still I was not discouraged, but came slowly back towards where the barrier of rocks blocked the entrance, down beneath which the little stream plunged to reappear some yards on the other side; and here, in the most open part of all, but screened from the sight of any one in the valley—here, where the water formed a little pool beneath the creper-matted rocks, I gave the rod a hard thrust down as far as it could be driven, bending so that my shoulder was beneath the water, when my heart leaped,

and then beat tumultuously, for the rod touched something. I tried again.

Yes, there was something beneath the sand!

Was it rock—stone?

I tried again, tapping with the iron.

No: it was not stone!

Was it metal?

I tried again, after examining the point of the rod, and this time drove it down fiercely.

Yes, it was metal; but the question to solve was this—

Was it gold?

CHAPTER XXIV.—FOUND?

MY excitement was intense; and all dripping as I was with the icy water, I leaped out on to the sand, with the intention of climbing over the barrier out into the bright, sunshiny vale, to cut a long, thin bamboo with which to probe the sand in a more satisfactory manner.

Then I stopped short, as the recollection of Tom's words flashed across my brain. His surmises might be correct; and, cautious as we had been, watchers might have seen our goings and comings, while my stepping out into the vale now to cut a pole would show that I had some particular object in view.

Another minute, though, and with my mind teeming with thoughts of rich ingots, plates, and vessels of gold, I began to consider as to what ought to be my next step. Without testing farther, I felt that I had been successful—that a wonderful stroke of good fortune had rewarded my efforts; and then how was I to dig it from its wet, sandy bed, and get it safely to the hacienda?

"Tom," I cried, excitedly, "I have not spoken sooner, lest you should think me an empty dreamer; but I have found that which I sought."

"Sure, Mas'r Harry?"

"Well—a—well, yes, nearly, Tom," I stammered, somewhat taken aback by his coolness; "and now I want you to swear that you will take no unfair advantage of what you have seen, or may see in the progress of this adventure."

"Want me to do *what*, Mas'r Harry?" said Tom, sturdily.

"I want you to swear—"

"Then I aint a-going to swear, nor nothing of the kind; so you need not think it. If I aint worth trusting, send me back; leastwise, you won't do that, because I shan't go. But, howsoever, I aint a-going to go swearing, and taking oaths and—there! be quiet! Look there, Mas'r Harry. Make him swear if you like. No, not that way—more off to the left. Turn your eye just past them three big trees by the lump of rock. That aint a deer this time, but some one on the look-out. Two on 'em, that there are!"

I glanced in the pointed-out direction, to see plainly that a couple of Indian heads were strained towards us, as if their owners were narrowly watching for our appearance; though I knew from the gloom beneath the arch where Tom was seated that we must be invisible to any one out in the bright afternoon sunshine.

What did it mean? Were these emissaries of Garcia watching my every act; or were they de-

scendants of the Peruvian priests, possessed of the secret of the buried treasures?

I shrank back farther into the cavern to crouch down, Tom imitating my acts, and together we watched the watchers, who remained so motionless that at times I felt disposed to ask myself whether I had not been mistaken, and whether these were not a portion of one of the rocks?

"It's no good, Mas'r Harry," said Tom; "we must make a rush for it. They'll stop there for a week, or till we go. 'Taint nothing new; there's always some one after you; and if you've found anything, I can't see how you're going to get it away. Let's go now, before it gets evening, for they'll never move till we do."

"But the—"

"Well, they aint obliged to know that we've found that, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, smiling. "We don't know it ourselves yet. What we've got to do is to play bold, shoot one or two of the birds as they dodge about farther in, then knock off a few of those pretty bits of white stone hanging from the roof, and they'll think that we've come after curiosities."

Tom's advice was so sound that I led the way farther into the cave, where we made the place echo as if about to fall upon our heads, as we had a couple of shots, each bringing down six of the Guacharo birds. Then re-loading, we secured three handsome, long stalactites, white and glittering, and thus burdened, we took our departure, walking carelessly and laughing and examining our birds, Tom stopping coolly to light his pipe just as we were abreast of where we had seen the Indians.

It was bold if the watchers' intentions were inimical, and we gave ourselves the credit of having thrown them off their scent, for we saw no more of them that evening, returning tired and excited to the hacienda to find my uncle quiet and cordial, for he seemed to be giving me the credit of trying to break myself of my inclination.

CHAPTER XXV.—THE HIDALGO'S DIGNITY UPSET.

THAT night I forgot all past perils, as I dreamed of gold—swimming in it—rolling in it—for it seemed to possess all the qualities of quicksilver, and, whenever I tried to hold it or sweep it up, it all escaped through my fingers.

I woke at last with a start, the sensation of rapid falling still on me, my chest heaving, and my face and limbs bathed with perspiration.

As far as I could judge, it wanted a couple of hours to daybreak; but I felt too much agitated to try and sleep again. So rising, and hurrying on my clothes, I sat there hour after hour, thinking and planning my future course, for a night's rest had not weakened my convictions.

The determination I came to at last was, that I could not do better than smother my impatience for a whole week, taking, the while, excursions in every other direction, so as, if possible, to blind any one who made a study of my movements. Then my journey to the cavern must be made by night, armed with spades, and taking with us a couple of mules to bring home the spoil.

So I mused, little recking of what was to come, till the great golden sun rose from his glorious

bed—when after lying down an hour, for the sake of the rest, I rose, and sought for Tom, to find him indulging in that bad habit of his, a morning pipe; when I told him my plans, and also asked him if he thought that we ought to take my uncle into our confidence.

"Not by no means, Mas'r Harry," he said.

"I may depend on you, Tom, of course?" I said.

"Depend on me, Mas'r Harry? Ah! I should think so. There never was nobody couldn't stick to no one no tighter than I'll stick to you. There won't be no getting rid of me; so don't never think so no more. What you say is quite right, and we'll wait a week. If no one aint touched that stuff for three hundred years, they'll leave it alone another week. I'll be on the look out for a couple of mules and spades, and we'll go, like the forty thieves, to the enchanted cavern, eh, Mas'r Harry? I'll have 'em, and we'll put them into the little wood under the mountain-side, eh? and keep 'em there till it's dark, when we'll start. A week to-day, or a week to-morrow?"

"A week to-day, Tom," I said; "and if you'll hang about here, I'll tell you what time we'll go for a shooting trip."

We had a roam after breakfast, and then, returning to the mid-day meal, I spent some time about the plantation, when, feeling tired and overcome with the heat, I went into the house, lay down upon the couch in the darkened room, and, I suppose from the effects of past fatigue, soon dropped off into a sound slumber.

I have some recollection of hearing voices, and a low, buzzing sound that, in my confused state, seemed somehow to be mixed up with gold. Then it was Lilla's beautiful golden hair, and I was seeing it spread out and floating once more upon the face of the river. Then I was wide awake, for I had heard Garcia's voice utter my name with an intensity of bitterness that made me shudder, as I rose upon my elbow.

"I tell you he goes to the Indian villages, where there are dark-skinned maidens. I know it; and then he comes back here, pretending to be ill and tired with his travels."

"It is not true!" I heard Lilla exclaim, angrily. "And if he were here now—"

"But he is not here now," said Garcia, sneeringly. "He has some assignation in the moonlit woods with one of his dark beauties, with fire-flies in her hair, and flashing eyes, such as those cold-blooded Englishmen love."

"It is false!" cried Lilla; "and if he were here you would not dare to say it."

"Dare!" he said, savagely—"dare!"

There was a faint cry then, and running to the open door, which led into the next room, I saw that Garcia had Lilla tightly by the wrist, while his other arm was round her waist.

She was struggling violently to free herself, but he held her tightly.

"Look here!" he said. "I will be played with no longer. I have been calm and patient while this English dog has come in here to insult and try to supplant me. He has always been placed before me since the day he set foot in the planta-

tion. Your mother is my debtor, and you are promised to me. Let there be any more of this trifling, and I will bring down ruin upon the place. I have sued gently and tenderly; but it is useless. Now I will show you that I am master; promise me now that you will speak to him no more, or—"

I never knew what threat Garcia would have uttered; for just then Lilla struggled again violently, and uttered a faint cry for help, one which made the hot, passionate blood fly to my forehead, seeming to blind me, as, running forward, I dashed out my clenched fist with all my might, and, with a crash, the Don went down over a chair, just as, alarmed by Lilla's cries, my uncle and Mrs. Landell ran into the room.

"What does this mean?" exclaimed my uncle, angrily, as Lilla ran, sobbing, to her mother.

"He struck me!" cried Garcia, furiously, as he scrambled up. "He has insulted me—a hidalgo of Spain; and I'll have his blood!"

"Better go and wash your face clear of your own," I said, contemptuously, as I suffered from an intense longing to go and kick him. "He was rude to my cousin, uncle, and I knocked him down. That's all."

With a savage scowl upon his face, Garcia made for the door, turned to shake his fist at me, and he was gone.

"Hal," said my uncle, gently—"Hal, my boy, I'd have given a year of my life sooner than this should have happened. You don't know these half-blood Spaniards as I do. You don't know what mischief may befall us all through your rashness."

"I wonder that you admit him to your house, uncle!" I exclaimed, hotly, for anger was getting the better of discretion.

I was sorry, though, the next minute; for, on hearing my words, my uncle glanced in a troubled way at his wife, who was trying to soothe poor weeping Lilla; while, during the next hour, I learned that I had had the misfortune to strike down the man who was my uncle's creditor to a large amount, as he had been Mrs. Landell's, or they would not have allowed his attentions to Lilla.

"I'm ashamed of it all, my boy," said my uncle; "but he holds our future entirely in his hands, and he looks for the receipt of Lilla's little dowry as part payment of the debts. I've struggled very hard against ruin, Hal; but it seems that it must come. And, after all, I don't know that I'm sorry, for it would have been a cruel thing—like selling that poor child. But when a man is embarrassed as I am, what can he do? And besides, we both thought at one time that Lilla had a leaning towards him. It was when he seemed to come forward generously with his money, which I was fool enough to take. But there, let it pass; and I repeat, mind, Hal, that I cannot allow matters to go on between you two. All will be at an end with Garcia, I suppose, and we shall have to turn out; but I cannot encourage you. I must begin again, I suppose."

"Uncle," I said, "I am deeply grieved that my coming should work such evil in the place," for my anger had now evaporated. "I ask your pardon for bringing such trouble upon your house. I could not help loving Lilla: to see her was to do that;

and even now, if I saw that fellow brutally raising his strength against her, I should feel obliged to strike him down."

"Things must take their course, Harry," said my uncle; "and I don't know that, after all, I am very much grieved. We have seen the man now in his true colours, and I learn that one of those colours is that which is worn by a coward. But while you stay, Harry, beware. Garcia has sworn that he'll have your blood, and he will."

"Yes, uncle," I said, quietly, "if he can!"

"Just so, Harry. But take care."

"I'll be on my guard, uncle," I said.

And then I left him, to go and think, my pulses throbbing as I thought of the exciting turn my adventures were taking—the event of the last hour—my discovery, if such it could be called; and I longed for the time when I could put it to the proof.

CHAPTER XXVI.—NOT QUITE.

THE time glided on, and I saw no more of Garcia; but, all the same, I could not help feeling that this calm might portend a storm.

My uncle was evidently very uneasy; but he said no more, merely proceeding with his business as usual, while with Tom I took trips here and there, making myself certainly now no burden, for we returned each evening loaded with game of some description—deer, fowl, or fish.

The first two days I saw at different times that we were followed; but afterwards it seemed that the spies, self-constituted or not, had given up their task, and that we were free to roam the forest as we pleased.

I was hopeful upon making this discovery, and longingly looked forward for the night of our great adventure.

It seemed as if that night would never come; but it came at last.

Instead of going to my bed-room, I stole out directly I had seen my uncle take his last cigar; and knowing that my absence would not be noticed, I made my way to the appointed place.

It was excessively dark—a favourable omen, I thought; and on reaching the little wood, there was Tom smoking his pipe, with the bowl inside his jacket, though had the ruddy glow been seen at a distance it might easily have been taken for the lantern of a firefly.

"Seen any one, Tom?" I whispered.

"Not a soul, sir."

"Have you got all you want?"

"I believe you, Mas'r Harry. Two spades, two mules, plenty to eat and drink, plenty of powder and lead, and coffee bags enough—brand-new ones of your uncle's—to put in all the treasure we shall find."

I could not see Tom's face, but I felt sure that he was indulging in a good grin. However, I said nothing; but enjoining caution, we each took the bridle of a mule, and began to thread our way cautiously amongst the trees, taking the precaution of setting off in an opposite direction to that we intended afterwards to pursue.

It was a strange and a weird journey, but we went on hour after hour, and nothing molested us. About

midnight we halted to let the beasts graze for half an hour in a grassy vale, while we did what Tom called the same, our pasture being cake, and our drink spirit and water.

Refreshed by our short halt, we again journeyed, and from time to time, after giving Tom the bridle of my mule, I stayed back to listen, and try to discover whether we were followed; but, save the cry of some beast, there was nothing to be heard.

About two hours after midnight we struck the little stream, and soon after were well in the ravine, when, for the purpose of exercising greater caution, and, as Tom said, running the risk of being shot, we each took the bridle of our mule over our arm, and went down on all-fours, crawling forward; and so slow was our progress that, were we watched and a glimpse of us obtained, I felt certain that we must be taken for a little herd slowly grazing towards the mouth of the great cavern.

We reached the rocky passes at last, and then, muffling the feet of the mules with the coffee bags, we took them cautiously in; the intelligent beasts clambering carefully and with hardly a sound, when we led them right in for some distance, gave them the maize we had brought, and then sat down in the darkness, listening to their crunching of the grain, and the loud cries of the Guacharo birds as they flew in and out, fortifying ourselves the while with a hearty meal, Tom foregoing his pipe for reasons of cautious tendency.

According to my calculations the day would break in about an hour's time; and during that hour, but always on the alert, we stretched ourselves upon the sand to rest, listening to every sound; for there was the possibility, we knew, of there being enemies, biped or quadruped, within a few yards of where we rested.

Towards daybreak it turned intensely cold—colder than I could have imagined possible in a tropic land; but we were prepared to bear cold as well as danger, for a fire would, of course, have been inviting observation.

Day at last, with a glorious flush of light reaching down into the valley, and making the stalactites on the roof to glisten. But our ideas now were bent on the object we had in view, and nature's magnificence was unnoticed.

As soon as the light had penetrated sufficiently, we led the mules farther in, and secured them in the broad passage, so that they could reach the water of the stream; our next step being to creep cautiously to the rocky barrier, and, well sheltering ourselves, to watch long and carefully for some sign of spies.

We did so for a full hour, but the silence of the place was even awful. The grey dawn had brightened into the sweet, fresh morning, with the heavy dew glistening in the sunshine as it dripped from the great tropic leaves—otherwise all was still; and convinced at length that those who had hitherto dogged our steps had for this time been eluded, I made a sign to Tom; and going in about fifty yards, we seized our spades and began to throw the light soil and sand into the bed of the little stream, shovelful after shovelful, so as to form a dam, which was at first washed down nearly as fast as we piled it up; but at last our efforts were suc-

cessful, and the dammed-up water began to flow aside, cutting for itself a new channel through the sand, and making its exit a few feet nearer the rocky barrier, but taking up its former course on the other side.

We rested then for a few minutes, faint and hot; but the excitement of the quest took from us the sense of fatigue, for the water had all drained away from the bed of the stream, and the little pool close under the rocky barrier now presented the appearance of a depression whose bottom was covered with a beautifully clean sand.

I had come provided this time with a longer rod, and, taking it in my trembling hands, I stood for a few moments upon the sand, anxious, but dreading to force it down lest it should be to prove that I had been deceived by my over sanguine nature.

Then, rousing myself, I thrust the rod down, when, at the depth of four feet, it came in contact with some obstacle.

Drawing it up, I tried again and again, Tom eagerly watching the while, as I proved to a certainty that there was something buried in the sand extending over a space of about three feet by two, while elsewhere I could force the rod down to the depth of over five feet without let or hindrance.

"Try yourself, Tom," I said, hoarsely, as I passed to him the rod, which he seized eagerly, and thrust down; while, trembling with excitement, I cautiously climbed the barrier, beneath which lay the hole, and peered over the rocks into the valley.

Not a leaf moving—all hot and still in the morning sun; and I returned to Tom.

"Well?" I said, eagerly.

"Well," echoed Tom, "I should think it is well! There *is* something buried here, Mas'r Harry, and it aint rocks, nor stones, nor wood. I fancy it's a lead coffin, for it feels like it with the point of the rod."

"Nonsense!" I said, impatiently. "There would be no lead coffins here, Tom."

"We'll see, anyhow, Mas'r Harry," he exclaimed. And seizing a spade, he began to hurl the sand out furiously. "There's a something down here, that's certain," he panted out, between the spadefuls, "but what it is goodness knows. All I can say is that it's a something."

"Let me come too, Tom," I said, excitedly.

"No, I sha'n't, Mas'r Harry!" he exclaimed. "There aint room for both of us to work at once, and we shall only be tripping one another up. Let me work a spell, and then you can take a turn."

Tom dug away at a tremendous rate, the wet sand cutting out firmly and easily, and soon the hole grew deep and wide, when, suddenly resting, Tom looked up at me.

"Say, Mas'r Harry," he said, just as I leaped down into the hole, "go and see if there's anybody coming."

"No," I said, looking at him suspiciously; "go you."

"Course I will, Mas'r Harry!" he exclaimed. "But say, what a s'picious sort of a fellow you do get."

Then, jumping out, he took his turn at inspecting the ravine, peering cautiously through the creepers

that covered the rocks, while I toiled hard at the spade, throwing up the wet sand.

"Don't throw no more this side, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, on his return. "Pitch it the other way. It's been falling into the water and making it thick, so as it will go running down and telling everybody as we're at work in here."

Tom's words made me leap out of the hole.

"Gracious, Tom!" I exclaimed, "what a fool I am!"

"Well, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, bluntly, "I did think as you was just now, over that s'picion o' yours; but as to throwing the sand into the water, why, one can't foresee everything. I don't think there's any harm done, though."

"I beg your pardon, Tom," I exclaimed, holding out my hand, "it was ungenerous."

"All right, Mas'r Harry," he said, taking my hand awkwardly, as if I had given him something to look at, and then he seemed to give it to me back again, when, once more turning to our task, we threw out the sand close under the rocky barrier, and it was well we did so, as will be seen in the end.

"There's something here. I can feel it with my spade, Mas'r Harry," exclaimed Tom, suddenly.

And then, moved by the same tremulous, nervous feeling as myself, he leaped out, and together we once more searched the vale with our eyes, to see nothing, though, but the same flagging leaves and the quivering motion of the bright, transparent air. But as we descended once more, a snorting, whinnying noise from the mules came from within, and in our excitement and alarm we were about to thrust in the sand again to bury our treasure, only reason told us of the folly of the act.

Spade in hand we ran into the gloom, and followed the winding of the track to where the mules were tethered, to find them uneasy and straining at their halters, as if something had alarmed them.

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CHAPTER XXVII.—WATCHED.



H, there's some one about, Mas'r Harry, I'm 'feard,' whispered Tom. "I wish we'd covered the stuff up again. What do you say to taking a light, and going right in?"

Tom's advice seemed so sensible that we ran back, fetched a candle and the matches, got a light, and then carefully examined the cave, peering wherever it seemed possible for any one to hide.

But our search was in vain, though we penetrated right to the point on the great gulf, and peered into the dark arch. As far as we could see all was silent, solemn, and grand, and we had nothing to fear from behind us while we worked.

"Well, it's been a deal of bother, Mas'r Harry; but it's better than thinking every moment that there's some one going to jump out on you."

The mules were quiet as we passed them on our way back, and we then inspected the valley from the spot we called our observatory, but all was still; and hastily seizing a spade, I was once more digging away, Tom casting aside the sand I threw out.

The edge of the spade touched something now every time I thrust it in. I had but to stoop and force in my fingers to feel the buried object; but moved by that spirit which induces people to examine so carefully the outside of a strange letter, when the interior is at their disposal, I feasted expectancy for a few minutes longer, telling myself that I would carefully clear out all the sand before I tried to ascertain what our treasure might be.

That was an exciting period, and I can picture it all, even now: the great cave, with its vast arch protruding right over the barrier, so that we were toiling in the shadow of the huge vault, filled by day with an ever-deepening golden, mellow gloom—a gloom deepening into blackness in the far depths; the trickling water, fresh from its mysterious source in the great amphitheatre; our splashed and stained figures, toiling together now in the pit we had dug; and the friendly scuffle which took place when, the sand being well cleared out, Tom stooped down, but only to be arrested by my hand.

"No," I exclaimed, "let me, Tom!"

And then, with painfully throbbing heart, I bent down, the blood seeming to flush to my head so as to nearly blind me.

The next moment my fingers were groping about amongst the mud and sand.

"Be quick, Mas'r Harry, please, or I shall bust!" cried Tom, just as my fingers encountered something hard.

And, with a cry of joy, I rose up, to exhibit to the staring eyes of Tom Bulk, a lump of glittering, yellow stone.

"Gold, Tom—gold!" I exclaimed. "And here's more and more!"

And I stooped down, to bring up two, three, four more lumps of the same glittering yellow stone.

"No, 'taint, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, gruffly, as he turned over one of the fragments in his hands. "That aint gold at all; that's what they calls mica. I allers recklect the name, cause it's the same as one of the prophets we used to read about at school. You might get plenty of that in the rocks, without much trouble. It's just the same stuff as some mates of mine once got out of a gravel pit at home, and they took it to the watchmaker in the town, and they says to him, 'What's that gold worth?' they says, 'Which gold?' he says, 'Why that,' they says, 'That's no more gold than you are,' he says; 'that's mica.' And then he told them that they might allers tell gold in a moment, by pulling out a knife and trying to cut it, when if it was gold it would cut easy like, just the same as a piece of lead. Try that, Mas'r Harry."

Snatching out my knife, I cut at one of the pieces of yellow stone, to find it splinter under the keen edge of my blade.

"I'll swear, though, that the pynt of that rod hit something else besides those bits of stone, Mas'r Harry. Try again; or, no—let me try."

The disappointment was so keen, that for a few moments I was speechless, and offered no opposition to Tom, who began to grope about with both hands, to bring up dozens more pieces of the micaeous rock, and then a piece of flint that seemed to have been chipped into shape, and then a long obsidian blade.

"We're a-coming to something, after all, Mas'r Harry," said Tom. "Here's a curiosity, and here—here—here's—pah! I don't like handling them."

As he spoke, Tom held out to my view three or four blackened bones, which he threw down again amongst the sand and water at the bottom.

"We shall come to the leaden coffin after all, Mas'r Harry," he said. "This has been a berryin' place after a fight, p'raps; but is it worth while to disturb it?"

I did not answer, for my attention had been taken up by a slight sound towards the interior of the cave.

"Here, quick, Tom!" I exclaimed.

And he leaped out in an instant, just as, with a fierce rush, the pent-up water conquered our little dam, took to its old bed, and swept down sand and soil, filling up our pit in a few minutes, as it bore all before it, and then subsided quietly into its former course, the sand sucking up the moisture where it had levelled; and to a casual observer the cave seemed as if it had been untouched for ages.

"Well, that's pleasant, certainly," said Tom, coolly; "but 'taint so bad as it might have been."

We haven't got wet. Never mind, Mas'r Harry, we'll have it out again by-and-by. There's more in that hole yet than we have seen. Them bits of yaller stuff weren't put in for nothing. But let's go up again to the prog, and have a good feed before we begin again; and suppose you bring your spade?"

I followed Tom, mechanically, spade in hand, to where, behind a mass of rock, we had made our storehouse, and, seating ourselves in the gloomy shade, I was busily opening my wallet, when Tom, who was getting some maize for the mules, suddenly pressed my shoulder, and, pointing in the direction of the cave's mouth, I heard him whisper the one word—

"Look!"

I looked, with my eyes seeming to be glued to the spot, as slowly there appeared above the rugged line formed by the top of the rocky barrier a human head, another, and another, with intervals of a dozen yards between each; and then they remained motionless, gazing straightforward into the great cavern.

CHAPTER XXVIII.—THE INTERPRETATION OF THE GOLDEN DREAMS.

COULD they see us, or could they not?

It was a hard trial, sitting there motionless, wondering whether those eager, searching eyes could penetrate as far through the gloom as where we sat. It seemed that they could not, as for full ten minutes their owners rested there, peering over the rocks.

The least movement on our part, a whinny or a snort from the mules, would have been sufficient to have betrayed our whereabouts, and bloodshed would perhaps have followed; but all remained still, save once, when I heard Tom's gun-lock give a faint click, just as first one and then another head was being withdrawn.

"There, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, in a whisper. "What do you think of that? They're on the lookout for us, you see. And we got grumbling about the little dam breaking, when what did it break to do? Why, to smooth over the rough work we had done, so as those copper-coloured gentlemen shouldn't see it, and make a row. But, say, Mas'r Harry, I a'most wonder they didn't see the water look thick. P'raps they will yet, so I wouldn't move."

Tom's advice was so good that we sat for quite a couple-of hours, when I told him of the plans I had made.

"Tom," I said, "it was an act of folly for us to be working there without one of us watching. I tell you what we must do: we must rest till it begins to grow dusk, and then begin, working in the dark. Do you see?"

"Well, I can see now, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, grinning; "but I don't see how I'm going to see then. How so be, Mas'r Harry, just as you like. I'm ready when you are."

The afternoon passed, the sun disappeared behind the mountains, and the dark shadows began to fall, just as, with a loud shriek, bird after bird winged its way out of the cavern for its nightly quest of food. We stole down to the barrier, looked long and cautiously down the valley, and then set to

work in the dim and fast-fading light to dam the stream—this time taking the precaution to lay lumps of rock and stalactites in the bed to support our embankment of sand and earth; when once more the stream took another course, the bed was dry, and in silence we stepped down to the site of our former labours.

I was not so sanguine now of the toil proving remunerative; but from the little knowledge I possessed of the Indians' superstitious character, I felt pretty sure that they would not venture by night to a cavern whose interior was clothed by them with endless mysterious terrors, though it possessed terrors enough, as we well knew, without the aid of superstition. But, all the same, there was the chance of others having an object in watching us, so every spadeful was thrown out in silence, every word spoken in a whisper. The night came on impenetrably black and obscure, but we worked on, feeling our way lower and lower, taking turn and turn, till once more we stood in the pit we had dug, and commenced groping about with our hands, for the spades told us that we had come to whatever was buried.

"More of these yaller stones," said Tom.

And we threw out, as quietly as we could, quite a couple of hundred rough lumps about the size of those fragments of granite used for Macadamising a modern road.

"Tom," I said, after trying about with my spade, "there's something more here. I believe those pieces were put in to deceive whoever searched."

"Let me clear out a little more of the sand, Mas'r Harry."

He threw out a few more spadefuls, filling the spade each time with his hands so as to throw out nothing more than sand; and then once more we began to feel about.

"What's that, Tom?" I whispered, hastily.

For I knew by his exclamation that he had found something particular.

"Nothin' at all," said Tom, sulkily.

"I insist upon knowing what it is," I cried, angrily, as I caught him by the arm.

For—it must have been the influence of the gold—I again felt suspicious.

"There it is, then," said Tom, gruffly—"ketch hold."

I eagerly took that which he had handed to me, and then, with a shudder of disgust, buried it away, as the gravedigger scene in "Hamlet" flashed across my mind; and then we worked on in silence.

"Bones," said Tom, "flint-knife things; and, hallo! what's that you've got, Mas'r Harry?" he exclaimed, in a sharp whisper.

For, in my turn, I had uttered an exclamation as my hands came in contact with a flat, heavy piece of metal, which, upon being balanced upon a finger and tapped, gave forth a sonorous ring.

"I don't know, Tom," I whispered huskily, "but—but it feels like what we are in search of."

"Do you think it is gold, Mas'r Harry?" he hissed, in a voice that told of his own excitement.

"Gold or silver, Tom," I said, in a choking voice.

And then I felt faint. Suspicions of a horrible nature seemed to float across my brain. "Suppose,"

I thought, "Tom should murder me now, to possess himself of the treasure, load the mules, and then bury me in the grave we had dug. The water would flow over it again in a few hours, and who would ever suspect the man who went away laden with wealth?"

The next moment, though, I had driven away the base thoughts, and was leaning against the rock above me.

"Tom," I said, "I'm faint; go and fetch the spirits."

"I will that, Mas'r Harry," he whispered, "for I don't know how it is, I'm feeling rather queer myself. It's this stuff, I think. I've got hold of one of these little tiles, and one can't see it, but it feels yaller."

Tom passed another plate into my hands, when, running my fingers over it, my heart beat more rapidly, for I could feel an embossed surface that told of cunning work, and I longed intensely to get a light and examine what we had found, though I knew such a proceeding would be folly.

In a few minutes Tom was back, and a draught from the bottle we had brought revived us, so that we quickly cleared out the wet sand and water that kept filtering in, and then as fast as we could grope, drew out plate after plate, and placed them in one of the coffee bags Tom had brought.

We did not need telling that it was gold. The sonorous ring told that as plate touched plate. The darkness, as I said, was intense. But I could almost fancy that a bright yellow phosphorescent halo was spread around each plate as we drew it from its sandy bed.

"But suppose, Mas'r Harry, as it's only brass?" whispered Tom, suddenly.

"Brass, Tom? No, it's gold—rich, yellow gold; and now who dares say I'm a beggar?"

"Not me, Mas'r Harry. But I won't believe it's gold till I've seen it by daylight. 'Taint lead, or it wouldn't ring. 'Taint iron, for it will cut, for I've been trying it."

"Hush, Tom!" I said, hoarsely. "Work—work! or it will be day, and we shall be discovered."

As I spoke, I bent down into the hole to drag out what felt like a vase, but all beaten in and flattened. Then another, and four or five curiously shaped vessels.

"Fetch another bag, Tom," I whispered; for the one we now had felt heavy, and I wanted them to be portable.

"Wait a bit, Mas'r Harry," whispered Tom. "Here's a rum 'un here—big as a table top. Lend a hand, will you?"

Trembling both with excitement, we toiled and strained, and at last extricated a great flat circular plate, that seemed to weigh forty or fifty pounds, and stood it against the rock.

And now, in the wild thirst, I forgot all about bags or concealment, as we kept scraping out the sand and water, and then brought out more plates, more cups, thin flat sheets, bars of the thickness of a finger, and six inches long. Then another great round disc, similar to the one I had dragged out with Tom; and then—then—sand—water—sand—water—sand—one solitary plate.

"There must be more, Tom!" I whispered, excitedly. "Where is the rod?"

He felt about for a few minutes, and I heard the metal clinking upon metal, as he drew the iron rod towards him. Then, feeling for the pointed end, he thrust it down here and there again and again.

"Try you, Mas'r Harry," he said, huskily.

I took the rod, and felt with it all over the pit; but everywhere it ran down easily into the sand, and I felt that we must have got all there was hidden there. And now, for the first time, I began to think of the value. Why, if this were all pure gold that lay piled up by our side, there must be thousands upon thousands of pounds' worth—fifty thousands at the least. But a pang shot through me the next instant, for the thought had struck me, suppose it should prove but copper after all?

The day would prove it, and the day, I hoped, would soon be there. But now a new trouble assailed me. What about Tom—what share would he expect?

"Mas'r Harry," said Tom, just then, "if this here all turns out to be gold, you'll be a rich man, won't you?"

"Yes, Tom," I said, "very wealthy."

Though my words would hardly leave my lips.

"Then you'll do the handsome thing by me when I get married, won't you, Mas'r Harry?"

"What shall I do, Tom?" I said, wondering the while what he would say.

"Low me a pound a week and my 'bacco, as long as I live."

"Yes, Tom, two if you like," I exclaimed, aloud.

"But now lend a hand here, and let's get these behind the rock, farther in."

Fatigue! We never gave that a thought, as, each seizing one of the round shields, we carried them cautiously in, and felt our way to where was the food, taking back with us more of the coffee-bags, in which we carefully packed the flattened cups, and each bore back a heavy bag; but only hastily to return again and again, to collect the plates and sheets and bars we had rapidly thrown out; when we returned once more to throw ourselves upon the sand, and feel over it with our hands again and again, creeping in every direction, forcing in our fingers, and running the sand through them, till we felt for certain that nothing was left behind.

"Now then, Tom," I said. "Quick!—the spades. There must not be a trace of this night's work left at daybreak."

Tom's hard breathing was the only response, as, seizing his spade, and giving me mine, he forced back the sand, helping me to shovel it in, until the floor was once more pretty level, and we knew the water would do the rest, even to removing the traces of our running to and fro, unless the sharp Indian eye should be applied closely to the floor of the cavern.

We toiled on, working furiously in our excitement, feeling about so as to compensate as well as we could for the want of sight, till I knew that no more could be done; when, retreating inward to where we had dammed the stream, we let the water flow swiftly back into its old channel, leaving the

bits of rock where they were, save one or two, whose loosening soon set the water free, so that it swept with a rush over the place where we had so lately toiled; and then, dripping with perspiration and water, we went and sat down to eat and rest, just as the first faint streaks of dawn began to show in the valley, and we could see that there was a barrier across the mouth of the cave.

CHAPTER XXIX.—IN SUSPENSE.

LIGHT—more light; but still not enough to tell of what our treasure was composed. If we had been at the mouth of the cave it would have been possible; but where we were, the darkness was still thick darkness.

Twice I had impatiently gazed at the metal I had been fingering with all a miser's avidity, when my attention was taken by an object upon a rock, close by where we had worked during the night—a toil that I had been ready to declare a dream time after time, but for the solid reality beneath my hands.

Tom caught sight of the object at the same moment as myself, and together, moved by the same impulse, we raced down, secured it, and then ran panting back with a gloriously-worked, but battered, *golden* cup, which we had placed upon the rock above us, and had thus escaped our search.

The next minute we were gazing tremblingly back to see whether we had been observed, for to lose now the wondrous treasure in our grasp seemed unbearable.

But no: all was still; and for my part I could do nothing but pant with excitement as the truth dawned more upon me with the coming day, that I was by this one stroke immensely rich. The treasure was gold—rich, ruddy gold, all save one of the great round shields, and that was of massive silver, black almost as ink with tarnish, while its fellow shield—a sun, as I now saw, as I afterwards made out the other to be a representation of the moon—was of the richer metal.

I was right, then, and Lilla could be mine—Garcia set at defiance—my uncle freed. But it was all too good to be true; and that little *IF* thrust itself into my thoughts—that little *IF* that has so much to do with our lives.

If I could get the gold safely away!

My brow knit as I thought of this, and my hand closed involuntarily upon the gun; but directly after I felt that we must bestir ourselves to pack our treasure safely.

"Let us have something by way of breakfast, Tom," I said, hastily, after throwing my coat over the part of the treasure visible.

And then we ate as men eat whose thoughts are upon other things, till we were roused by a whinnying from the interior of the cave, when Tom hastily carried some maize to the mules, so as to ensure their silence in case of the Indians again approaching the cavern.

As far as I could make out from the obscurity where I was, there was not a trace of the sand having been disturbed—the water had removed it all; but I trembled as I thought of the consequences of some Indian eye seeing the golden vessel, for I knew

that we should never have been allowed to return alive.

My plans now were to spend a portion of the day in carefully packing our treasure as compactly as possible, and then, when night had well fallen, loading the mules, and making the best of our way to the hacienda. Easy, practicable plans apparently; but Fate declared that I had not yet earned the wealth.

I said that Tom had gone to see about the mules, and for a few minutes I was hesitating about the nearest bag to me, one which, from the feel, contained a mixture of bars, plates, and cups, which I knew might be packed in a quarter the space.

I looked to the mouth of the cave: all was sunshine there; but it was dark where I stood, and feeling that, if the task of packing was to be done, the sooner it was set about the better, I seized the bag, drew out a large and massive vessel, two or three plates, that must have formed a part of the covering of some barbaric altar, and was about to draw forth more, when I heard a faint noise, and, turning, Tom sprang upon me with a fierce look in his countenance, bore me down amongst the treasure, and laid his hand upon my mouth. His whole weight was upon me, and he had me in such a position that all struggling seemed vain; but with the thought strong upon me that the temptation of the gold had been too much for him, and that as some victim had evidently been sacrificed at its burial I was to fall at its disinterring, I bowed myself up, and the next moment should have endeavoured to throw him off, had not his lips been applied to my ear, and a few words been whispered which sent the blood flowing, frightened back to my heart, as the full extent of their meaning came home.

"Mas'r Harry, don't move: you're watched!"

It was no time for speaking, and I was in such a position that I could not see, while for quite a quarter of an hour we lay there motionless, when, gliding aside, Tom made room for me to rise, pointing the while towards the mouth of the cave, through which I could see, some distance down the ravine, a couple of Indians, curiously peering about, and more than once stooping cautiously over the little stream which there ran, half-hidden by rocks and undergrowth.

"They're looking to see if the water's muddy, Mas'r Harry," whispered Tom. And then, directly after—"Creep back a little more behind the rock here; they're coming this way again."

What! step back and leave the treasure? No, I felt that I could not do that, but that I would sooner fight for it to the last gasp.

Tom was right, though. The Indians were coming nearer, disappearing at length behind the rocks at the mouth as they came cautiously on; and I lay down flat upon my face to watch for their appearance above the barrier, when they began to climb it, Tom retiring the while farther into the cavern.

Two men, not such odds as need give us fear if we were compelled to fight; for after the pains to attain the treasure, it seemed impossible to resign it. My conscience would not teach me any wrong-doing in its appropriation.

Ten minutes elapsed, and the Indians did not

appear; but it was plain enough that they knew of the treasure's existence, and watched its safety. But had they seen us come?

I thought not, as at last they came slowly up, looking from side to side, as if in search of intruders; and my heart beat with a heavy, excited throb as I thought of the discovery, and the inevitable struggle to follow. Who would be slain, I wondered. Should I escape? And then I shuddered as I pictured the bloodshed that might ensue.

And all this time nearer came the Indians, until they stood amongst the blocks of stone, peering eagerly in, and shading their eyes to pierce the darkness.

For a few minutes it seemed to me that they must see that the soil had been disturbed, or else make out my crouching form; but it soon became evident that they saw nothing—that the cavern presented no unusual aspect. As far, too, as I could make out, there was an evident unwillingness to enter, as if the place possessed some sanctity or dread which kept them from passing its portals.

They seemed to be content with watching and listening; but would they keep to that?

I thought not; for suddenly my breath came thickly, as I saw one of the men make a sign or two to his companion, and then begin cautiously to descend into the cavern; when, nerving myself for the struggle, I stretched out my hand for my knife and pistols, determined to fight to the death for that which I had won.

Cautiously, and in a peculiarly shrinking fashion, the Indian climbed down, while his companion leaned anxiously forward. Then followed moments of suspense that seemed hours, as the man who now stood beneath the arch stretched forth both hands, as if invoking some power, uttered a few words, and then stopped short, for his companion gave a loud, peculiar cry, and I saw that he was anxiously gazing down the ravine, when the first Indian hurriedly joined him, and together they glided silently away.

"That was a close shave, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, creeping softly forward, gun in hand. "That poor chap didn't know what a risk he ran of being dead and buried. I had him covered with my gun the whole time; and if he'd made at you with his knife, down he must have gone."

"I want the gold, Tom," I said, hoarsely, "but no bloodshed."

"More don't I, Mas'r Harry," he replied; "so all they've got to do is to leave us alone, and alone we'll leave them. Now, what's to be done next?"

That was plain enough, and needed no answering. The treasure had to be carefully packed; and together we worked hard, fitting the plates, bars, and tile-shaped pieces together in the bags, so that they should occupy as little space as possible, binding together and covering the two great discs, and then packing the vases and cups, the most awkward part of our discovery; but at last we had all in the ample supply of coffee-bags Tom had brought, and bound round and round with the cotton ropes which we unravelled for the purpose.

And then I breathed more freely, as one by one we carried our heavy, awkward-looking packages into the part of the cave where the mules were, and

then laid them behind a rock in the dark vault, ready for the night's journey.

"And now," said Tom, "we'd better take it in turns to have a good sleep, the other keeping watch—for we shall be up all night again."

I turned round to Tom, to stare with astonishment at the man who could talk so coolly about sleep with such a treasure beneath his charge. As for me, my veins throbbed with the fever that coursed through them, and I could not have closed my eyes for an instant till I had my treasure in safety.

"Will you take first turn, Mas'r Harry?" said Tom, yawning.

"No," I said, peevishly; "you can sleep if you wish to."

"Well, Mas'r Harry, I do wish to," said Tom; "and that aint nowise wonderful, when I was hard at work all night."

Tom made no more ado, but stretched himself out in the sandiest spot he could find; and the next minute there could not be a doubt as to the state he was in, for he snored loudly.

Judging from appearances, when I once more walked, gun in hand, towards the mouth of the cave, it was about four o'clock, so that there were at least five or six hours to pass before we could attempt our homeward journey.

I did not dare to go far towards the mouth, lest there should be watchers there; but picking out the best spot for observation, I stood and gazed eagerly around, scanning every crag, tree, and bush within range, in the search I made for enemies.

If I could only get the treasure safely to the hacienda, we could melt it down there, and turn it into ingots handy for packing; when, with the offer of ample for the purchase of a good farm, I could perhaps persuade my uncle to return to England, or, if he preferred, he might stay here. I could easily enable him to free himself from Garcia, who could be set at defiance; and the world was all one to me could I but be at Lilla's side.

Then I thought again whether it would be wisdom to attempt to carry off the treasure by night, we two alone to guard it. I stood hesitating, thinking of how easy it would be for the Indians to take us at a disadvantage; of what an insecure place the plantation would be should the Indians discover that the treasure was gone; and at last I made up my mind as to my course, and walked sharply back to where Tom was snoring.

Then, stooping down, I unfastened the packages which contained the little bars, took out fifty, and secured the package again; when I shook and roused up Tom.

CHAPTER XXX.—ANOTHER ENCOUNTER.

"RIGHT, Mas'r Harry, I'm here," he exclaimed. "Put half those about you in your different pockets, Tom," I said. And he did as he was bid, handling the little ingots as if they were so much lead. "And Tom, I want your advice. I've come to the conclusion that it is not prudent to take all this through the woods at night, with Indians about."

"That's sense, that is," said Tom, interrupting.

"I think, Tom, we'll hide it—all but this, which

we'll take back; and then we can come well prepared some other time, to take the rest away."

"Good, Mas'r Harry; but where'll we hide it?"

"That's what I'm thinking, Tom," I said. "Where do you think would be a good place?"

"Well, Mas'r Harry, I shouldn't bury it, because that's the way it was hidden afore; nor I wouldn't chuck it down the big gulf place, as you call it: it would be safe enough, only we couldn't get it again."

"Don't fool, Tom," I said, impatiently.

"Who's a fooling?" said Tom, gruffly. "Tell you what, Mas'r Harry, I don't think those Indian chaps would ever have the pluck to go right in where we've been. What do you think of the way under the arch on the raft?"

"The very idea that struck me, Tom," I said.

And then I told him my plans—the result being that, at the end of a couple of hours, the little raft was launched, laden with our packages, which took it down to the water's edge; and once more, with candles stuck in their clay sticks, we were poleing ourselves along very slowly in the black tunnel.

The lights flashed on roof, and from off the water, which rippled over the bamboos and soaked us through and through; but we pressed slowly and steadily on till we must have been half-way to the vault of the troubled waters, when I whispered to Tom to stop.

We were now in a part where the tunnel widened out to thirty or forty feet, though the roof was not more than a foot above our heads, and remarkable for the streaks of a creamy spar, which banded it in every direction.

"Tom," I said, in a whisper, as I glanced round to see that we were alone, "could we do better than this?"

As I spoke, I was trying the depth with my bamboo pole, to find that, wherever I reached, there was not more than five feet of water.

"But suppose it's that shivering sand, and it swallows it up, Mas'r Harry?"

"But it's hard rock, Tom. Feel," I whispered.

There was no mistaking the firmness of the bottom; so carefully marking the spot by a cross which I scored on the roof with my knife, we softly dropped in six golden packages over the side of our little raft, which seemed ready to leap out of the water on being released from its heavy burden.

A soft, gentle splash in each case, and then the black waters closed over each package, a pang striking my heart as they disappeared; and I asked myself whether I was wise, now that I had gained the object of my search, to let it go from me again like that. I was roused, though, from my reverie by Tom, who generally had a word of encouragement for me at the blackest times.

"There, Mas'r Harry, that's covered up well, and it can be easily uncovered again; and I'll lay my head agin a halfpenny apple, that if we don't come to fetch that there, nobody else won't; for unless we told, nobody wouldn't never find it."

I could not help thinking that Tom was right; and now, with my treasure found, and, as it were, banked for my use, I felt lighter of spirit, and we floated easily back in about a quarter of the time occupied in going; when, carefully taking our raft

once more to pieces, we concealed it behind the rocks, and made the best of our way back to the mules.

"Now, Mas'r Harry, you may do as you like; but I say, let's get twenty or thirty of these stone icicles, just as if we'd come on purpose to fetch 'em, then get atop of the mules, and ride bang out as if we were not afraid of anybody."

It was good counsel, and I followed it, riding over the stony barrier just as the sun was setting. The stalactites swung in coffee-bags on either side of the mules, which, delighted at being once more in the open air, cantered off merrily whenever the track would allow.

It was just beginning to grow dark upon as glorious an evening as ever shone upon the gorgeous tropic world, when we reached the end of the ravine, and both became at the same instant aware of about a dozen Indians, who advanced quickly, making friendly signs, and repeating the word—"Amigos! Amigos!"

"They want to see what we've got, Mas'r Harry," chuckled Tom. "Don't show fight unless they do."

Professing to ask for tobacco and a light, the little party surrounded us; and, as if by accident, one man touched the bags, and contrived to see their contents, when he said something to his companions, to whom we civilly gave what they asked, avoiding all trace of tremor, while they were smiling and servile. But I could not help feeling what would have been our fate had the lading of those mules been the treasure, for twelve to two were long odds.

It was evident that they were satisfied, and giving us the country salutation, they bade us good night, and we moved off; but Tom pulled up, and shouted after the leader of the party, who returned; when, with a face whose gravity could be seen, even in that dim, short twilight, to be extreme, Tom took out one of his smallest stalactites, held it up before him, and repeated the word "buono" three times, and then presented it to the Indian, who received it with grave courtesy and retired.

"There," said Tom, "if he don't go and tell his tribe that we're madmen after that, why I was never born down Cornwall way. Say, though, Mas'r Harry, that was a narrow escape; those chaps watch that gold, and they thought we had it; and if we had been loaded that way I'm thinking that it would have been buried again, with two skulls and bones this time, and those would have been ours."

I shuddered as I urged my mule onward, anxious to reach the hacienda, which we did earlier than I hoped for, stabled our mules, and then, relieving Tom of his golden burden, I went up to my room and secured it in my travelling case before descending to find my uncle sitting, with Lilla kneeling beside him, holding his hand; and a glance showed me that both she and Mrs. Landell had been weeping bitterly.

I was surprised to see them assembled at so late an hour; but, taking no notice, I went up and shook hands.

"Well, Harry," said my uncle, sadly, "had enough of exploring yet?"

"Quite, uncle," I said. "I have finished now."

He looked up at me for a moment, and then fell to stroking Lilla's golden hair.

"Well, lad, I'm sorry," he said, after a pause; "but I may as well tell you, and be out of my misery. But don't think I blame you, lad—don't think I blame you, for I suppose it was to be."

"What is it, uncle?" I said, in an indifferent tone. "No new trouble, I hope?"

He glanced at me in a sad, disappointed way, and then said, sternly—

"I don't reproach you, Harry; but that blow you struck Garcia has been my ruin, unless I pay his favour with this."

As he spoke he laid his hand tenderly upon Lilla's head, then drew her to him, and kissed her lovingly.

"But we can't do that, my little lamb—we can't do that," he continued. "We are to be turned out of the place; but I dare say there's a living to be got, eh, Harry? You'll not leave us, I suppose, now we're in trouble? You said you would not, and now, my lad, is the time to put you to the proof. You'll work now, won't you?"

"Not if I know it, uncle," I said, coolly. "Why should I work? I'm much obliged for your hospitality; but I feel now disposed to go back to England, and the sooner the better."

My uncle did not speak, and a dead silence fell upon all. I caught one sad, reproachful glance from Lilla's eyes; and then she clung, weeping and whispering, to my uncle, who, however, only shook his head.

"I think, my dears, we'll go to rest," he said at last, suddenly. "Lilla, my child, fetch the Book—we'll have one chapter in the old place for the last time; for who can tell where we shall be to-morrow?"

My heart burned within me as I longed to tell the true-hearted old fellow of my success; but I would not then. The news of Garcia's behaviour gave me an opportunity that I could not resist, and, after sitting in silence till my uncle had read his chapter and offered up a simple prayer for the protection of all, I allowed them to part from me, almost coldly, though more in sorrow than in anger, and to go, aching of heart, to bed.

I knew that Tom would not say a word, so I was safe; and the next morning, after a sad, dull breakfast, I sat with them all in the darkened room, my uncle starting at every noise in the yard, where all looked bright and fair—fair as sweet Lilla, whose eyes met mine from time to time in mingled reproach and wonder at what seemed to her my heartless behaviour.

We had not long to wait, for it seemed that Garcia had declared his intention of being there that morning to demand payment of money, the greater part of which had been advanced to Mrs. Landell when a widow—a debt which my uncle had undertaken to repay at the same time that he had accepted further favours of Garcia.

We had not been seated there an hour when we heard Garcia's voice in the yard, and Lilla crept closer to Mrs. Landell.

"Harry," said my uncle, "you must please leave the room. I was in hopes that you would have gone out. I cannot find it in my heart to give up without making an appeal to Garcia for time."

"An appeal that shall end in a new bargain being made with respect to that poor girl!" I exclaimed. "Uncle, be a man, or you will make me blush for you!"

My uncle was about to speak, when Garcia noisily entered the room, his sneering, triumphant face turning pale with rage as he saw me seated there.

Mrs. Landell and Lilla both cast an imploring glance at me, one which I answered by crossing over, taking Lilla's hand, and whispering a few words of comfort and encouragement.

Garcia's eyes flashed, but he kept down his resentment, and, advancing to the table—

"Senor Landell," he said, "I come to demand the money that is due to me, and which I must now have. Of course you are prepared?"

"Senor Don Garcia," said my uncle, "I am not prepared—you know that," he continued, sadly. "But still these unjust proceedings will do you no good. I ask you as a favour for time. I am certain that I can realize more from the plantation than you can. Give me time, and it will prove to your advantage."

"Miss Lilla," said Garcia, advancing, with a smile, "you hear your stepfather's words. It rests with you. Shall I give him time?"

Lilla's only reply, as I stood back, was a shudder, and she clung more closely to her mother.

The action was not lost upon Garcia, who stepped back rapidly to the door, uttered some words to a couple of men waiting, and they followed him into the room.

"You have the papers," said Garcia, fiercely, to the elder man, who seemed a sort of notary; "take possession of this place and all thereon, as forfeited to me in accordance with the bonds made. Senor Landell, in an hour I require you to be off this plantation. As for you," he exclaimed, turning to advance threateningly upon me, "you are an intruder. This place is my property; leave here this instant! Or, stay," he said, with mock courtesy, "perhaps the gay young English senor will take compassion upon his uncle's position, and release him by paying his debt. What does Senor Grant say?"

"Harry, for Heaven's sake," cried my uncle, "let there be no disturbance! Take care, or there will be bloodshed!" he cried.

For as I advanced to confront Garcia, he drew out a pistol.

"Stand back, uncle!" I exclaimed, angrily, for he had caught my arm. "I know how to deal with this cowardly bully! Put up that pistol, or—"

I did not finish my sentence, but drew one from my own breast, and presented it right at Garcia's head, just as, in obedience to a nod, he was dragged back into a chair, and Tom Bulk's sturdy arms pinioned him, but not in time; for, with a cry of rage, Garcia drew the trigger. There was a sharp report, and then, as the smoke floated upward, a wild cry that froze my blood echoed through the room.

CHAPTER XXXI.—SLIPPERY METAL.

THAT cry was from Lilla, who ran to my uncle's side just as he staggered to a chair, holding his face with both hands.

"Not much hurt, I think," he gasped; "but it was a close shave—a sort of farewell keepsake," he said, with a faint attempt to smile.

It was, indeed, a narrow escape, for the ball had ploughed one of his cheeks, so that it bled profusely,



and I could have freely returned the shot in the rage which for a few moments shook my equanimity.

Perhaps it would have been better for all parties had I fired, for it would only have been disabling as black-hearted a scoundrel as ever breathed. But my plans were made, and by an effort I kept to them, just as the notary was about to flee in alarm.

"Loose him, Tom," I said; and Garcia started up, foaming almost at the mouth. "Keep back there," I said, "and do not let me see one of those hands move towards breast or pocket. The instant I detect any such act I fire."

He stood scowling for a few moments, but not meeting my eye, and I continued, addressing the notary—

"Give me full particulars of this amount, and I will pay it."

"You, Harry—you!" exclaimed my uncle.

"You!—you vile impostor! You beggar and vagabond! You do not possess a piece of gold," roared Garcia, bursting forth into a fit of vituperation. "Don't listen to him—don't heed him; it's a trick—a plan. I take possession. The money was to be paid this morning, and it is not paid, so I seize the plantation."

"You are the business man," I said, coolly, to the notary—with that coolness that the possession of money gives—"this is a mining country, and gold in ounces should be current."

"The best of currency, senor," said the notary, with a smile and a bow.

"Tell me the amount, then, in ounces," I said, "and I will pay you."

"Don Xeres," gasped Garcia, almost beside himself with rage, "I will take no promises to pay."

The old notary shrugged his shoulders.

"But, Senor Garcia, there are no promises to pay. I understand the English senor to say that he will pay—at once! Am I not right, senor?"

"Quite," I said. "Uncle, I will lend you this amount."

"But, Harry, my dear boy, you are mad! You have no idea of the extent."

"Two hundred and five ounces would equal the amount in *pesos d'oro* which Senor Landell is indebted," said the notary, quietly.

"Good," I said. "Then will you have proper balances brought? Uncle, see to the return of your papers."

"I am in the hands of Senor Xeres," said my uncle, in a bewildered tone. "He will see justice done."

The old notary bowed and smiled, while I crossed to where my leather case stood upon a side table, brought it to my chair, and then seated myself, slowly unbuckling the straps and unlocking it, while the balances were brought, when I brought out six of the little yellow bar ingots, and passed them over to the notary, who was the banker of the district as well.

He took them, turned them over, wiped his glasses, and replaced them; then examined each bar again.

"Pure metal, I think, senor?" I said, smiling.

"The purest, senor Ingles," he replied, with another bow.

And then, placing the ingots in the balances, he recorded each one's weight as he went on, to find them, with a few grains variation more or less, six ounces each.

Five times, to Garcia's astonishment and rage, did I bring from the case in my lap six of the



golden bars, the notary the while testing and weighing them one by one, in the coolest and most business-like way imaginable. Then his spectacles were directed inquiringly at me, and I brought out four more, which were duly weighed and placed with the

others. Then again were the spectacles directed at me.

"Another ounce, less a quarter, senor," said the notary. "I have here two hundred and four ounces and a quarter."



"Fortunatus's purse wants aiding, uncle," I said, unwilling to exhibit more of the golden spoil. "You can manage the three-quarters of an ounce?"

Poor man! He was speechless; but he rushed to a secretary, took out a little canvas bag, and counted out the difference in coin. When, coolly drawing out bags of his own, the notary made up a neat package of the bars, enclosing therewith his account of the weights, tied it up, lit—with apparatus of his own—a wax taper, sealed the package, and handed it to Garcia, who took it with a fierce scowl, but only to dash it down the next instant upon the table.

"I will not take it!" he exclaimed. "It is a trick—the gold is base!"

"Senor Don Pablo Garcia, I have—I, S. Xeres—have examined and proved that gold," said the old notary. "I say it is pure, and you cannot refuse it. Senor Landell, there are your bonds now. Senor Garcia is angry, but the business is terminated."

Rising and bowing to us with a courtly grace, that could win nothing less than respect, the old notary handed some deeds to my uncle, and then, picking up the gold, he passed his arm through Garcia's, and led him away, the notary's attendant following, with his master's writing-case and balances.

But the next moment a shadow darkened the door, and Garcia would have rushed in, had not Tom blocked the way.

"Now then, where are yer shovin' to, eh?" grumbled Tom; and there was a scuffle, and the muttering of a score of Spanish oaths, with, I must say, a couple of English ones, that sounded to be in Tom's voice, when Garcia shouted, in a voice that we could all hear—

"Tell him there is another debt to pay yet, and it shall be paid in another coin!"

The door closed then, and it was evident that Tom was enjoying the act of seeing Garcia off the premises, while the next minute my uncle was holding me tightly by both hands, and my aunt sobbing on my neck.

"And I was saying you were like the rest of the world—like the rest of the world, Harry, my dear boy," was all my uncle could say, in a choking voice. And there were tears in his eyes as he spoke.

"Say no more, uncle—say no more," I exclaimed, shaking him warmly by the hands.

When he took his wife to his heart, telling her in broken words that there was to be peace at the old place after all.

It must have been from joy at the happiness I had been the means of bringing into that home, or else from the example that was set me, for the next moment I had Lilla in my arms, kissing her for response to the thanks looking from her bright eyes; and even when my uncle turned to me I could only get one hand at liberty to give him, the other would still clasp the little form that did not for an instant shrink.

"Too bad—too bad, Harry—too bad," said my uncle, with a smile and a shake of the head. "I am no sooner free of one obligation than I am under another; and so now, on the strength of that money, you put in your claims."

"To be sure, uncle," I said, laughing; "and you see how poor Lilla suffers."

I repented saying those words the next moment, for Lilla shrank hastily away, blushing deeply.

My uncle and I were soon left alone, when, holding out his hand to me, he said, in a voice whose deep tones told how he was moved—

"Harry, my boy, I can never repay you the service you have done me; but if I live I will repay you the money."



"Look here, uncle," I said, "once and for all—let that be buried. There, light your cigar; now I can talk to you." And, taking our places in a recess by one of the shaded windows, I spoke to him

in a low tone. "You know how I have spent my time lately?"

He nodded.

"Treasure seeking?"

He nodded again.

"Uncle, at times it almost seemed to me a madness; but I persevered and succeeded. Look here!"

I tore open the case, and showed him the sixteen golden ingots remaining.

"And you found all that, Harry! My boy, you were fortunate indeed."

"All that, uncle!" I said with a smile. "That is not a hundredth part. I am rich. I? No! We are rich; and now I want your advice. What are we to do? for I've hidden my treasure again, till I can fetch it away in safety."

"You have done well, then," he said, gravely. "But is not this some delusion, my boy?"

"Are these delusive, uncle?" I exclaimed, clinking together two of the sonorous little bars. "Were those delusive which Garcia has carried off? No, uncle, I thought once it must be a dream; but it is a solid reality. I have found the treasures of one of the temples of the sun—ingots, plates, sheets, cups, and two great shields besides, all of solid metal."

"Harry," said my uncle, "it sounds like a wild invention from some story-teller's pen, and I should laugh in your face but for the proofs you have given me. But you must not stay here in this country. It is as much yours as any lucky adventurer's, but your right would be disputed in a hundred quarters; while, as for the Indians—"

"Disputed, uncle?" I said, interrupting him. "Disputed if it were known. You know it."

"Does any one else?" said my uncle, anxiously.

"Tom was with me. We found it together," I said, "and he helped me to conceal it again. But I could trust him with my life. In fact, uncle," I said, laughing, "we owe one another half a dozen lives over our discovery, for either I was saving his or he was saving mine all the time."

"But the Indians, Harry—the Indians. That is a sacred treasure—the treasure devoted to their gods, hence its remaining so long untouched. If they knew that you had taken it, no part of South America would hold you free from their vengeance. They would have your life, sooner or later."

"Pleasant place this, certainly, uncle," I said, laughing, "what with Garcia and the Indians."

"I don't think it could become known from those ingots," said my uncle, musingly, "though Garcia will rack his brains to find out how you became possessed of them. And yet I don't know; you see they have two or three characters stamped on them, that the Indians might know. But were you seen?"

"Coming from the place, uncle? Yes, I suppose I must have been watched tremendously. But all the same, I have the treasure hidden away; and as to the risk from the Indians, I don't feel much alarmed; and you may depend upon it that they are in the most profound— What's that?"

My uncle uttered an ejaculation at the same moment, for, as I spoke, rapid as the dart of a serpent, a dark shadowy arm was passed under the blind

close to the little table where we sat, and on looking there were but fifteen of the little ingots left.

"Stop here! I'll go," I exclaimed.

And in an instant I had torn aside the blind, pushed open the jalousie, and leaped out into the outer sunshine, to stand in the glare, looking this way and that way, but in vain: there were flowers, and trees, and the bright glare, but not a soul in sight.

I stood for an instant to think; and then, feeling for my pistol to see if it was there if wanted, I dashed across the plantation towards the forest, peering in every direction, but without avail; and, at last, more troubled than I cared to own to, I returned, dripping with perspiration, to the hacienda, to meet Tom.

"Say, Mas'r Harry, what's the good o' running yourself all away, like so much butter? 'Taint good for the constitution."

"Have you seen any Indians lurking about today, Tom, anywhere near the place?"

"Not half a one, Mas'r Harry, because why? I've been fast asleep ever since I saw the Don off the premises."

"Keep a good look-out, Tom," I said.

And then I hurried in to my uncle, who looked troubled.

"I don't like that, Harry," he said. "There were eavesdroppers close at hand. I thought I would go too, but I saw nothing. Not a man had been out of the yard. But there, take the gold up to your room, and lock it in the big chest, the key is in it. I put it here for safety till you got back, and—confound!"

We gazed in blank astonishment, for, as my uncle opened his secretary, and laid bare my leather case, which he had locked and strapped up, there it was with the straps cut through, the lock cut out, and the fifteen ingots gone!

CHAPTER XXXII.—BARS WITHOUT BOLTS.

AS soon as my uncle had recovered from his astonishment, he took out and loaded a couple of brace of pistols, laying one pair ready to hand, and placing the others in his pockets.

"Harry, my lad," he then said, seriously, "we have entered upon something that will take all our wits to compass. We have some cunning people to deal with; but Englishmen have brains of their own, and perhaps we can circumvent those who are against us. I wonder whether Garcia will get safe home with his share."

I was too much put out to think or care much about Garcia just then. Certainly, I did think it a good thing that he had been paid off, and the principal current of my thoughts just then tended to a congratulatory point, as I thought of how much more serious the loss might have been. That I had done right in concealing the treasure was evident; and there it must lie, I thought, until I could bear it at once away out of the country.

My musings were interrupted by my uncle.

"Harry," he said, "I'd give something if the women were away from here. I hope I am magnifying the trouble, but I fear that we are going to be between two fires; and, at present, I hardly know what course to pursue. I'm afraid of your gold, my

lad; but a prince's fortune must not be slighted; and my conscience does not much upbraid me with respect to helping you to secure it. But we must not pass over this robbery in silence. That was done by no one here, I am sure. We must try and put an end to eavesdropping so close at hand, or more strange things may happen. Now, take my advice, both you and Tom: go well-armed, don't stir many yards from the plantation; and now come with me, and let us carefully search the place inside and out. Nearly a hundred ounces of gold taken within the last few minutes, and part even from under our eyes. It won't do, Harry—it won't do!"

Tom was called in, armed, and then the place was thoroughly searched, inside and out, but without avail; not a trace could be seen, till, after a few minutes' thought, my uncle made a sign to me, placed Tom in one position, me in another, and then disappeared into the house.

Five minutes after there was a loud cry, the sharp crack of a pistol, and what seemed like some beast of prey leaped from one of the upper windows full twelve feet to the ground, about half-way between Tom and myself.

With a rush we made for the falling object, grasping it as it fell to the earth; but the next instant I was sent staggering back, as the Indian—for such it was—bounded up, striking me in the chest with his hand; while, when I gathered myself together again, Tom was standing alone, and my uncle came running out, holding a handkerchief to his face, which had recommenced bleeding.

"Did you stop him?" he cried.

"Stop?" said Tom. "It was like trying to stop a thing made of quicksilver. But," he continued, with a grin, "I've got his skin; he left that in my hands, and, I say, Mas'r Harry, if he wasn't made of quicksilver, he was of gold."

For at that moment, as Tom shook the dark native cloth garment left in his hands by the fleeing Indian, the sixteen ingots fell to the ground, to be instantly secured and borne into the house.

"Harry," said my uncle, "I told you we had to deal with a cunning enemy. That fellow was in the space between the ceiling and roof of my bedroom. How he got there I can't tell; but," he added, with a shudder, "I fear if he had not been dislodged, some of us would not have seen the morning's light."

"But pursuit, uncle," I cried. "Let us try and overtake him."

"No—no," he said, uneasily. "We should only be led into a trap in the forest, and we are too weak for that. I'm afraid, Harry, that this affair is going to assume dimensions greater than we think for. It is evident that the Indians suspected you of having been at their sacred treasure, and despatched a spy, to watch if their suspicions were correct. I tried to bring him down, but I had only a momentary glance, and I must have missed him. No, Harry, there must be no pursuit, but plenty of scheming for defence, if we wish to hold that which we have got. As I said before, there is no knowing where this will end. Which way did he go?"

"Right away towards the forest, sir," said Tom.

"Perhaps only to slip back and watch by some

other path," muttered [my uncle. "Give me the bars, Harry, and I'll take them in, while you and Tom walk cautiously round before coming to me. Go, one each way, right round, so as to meet again here, and then come in, and we will talk matters over a little. But stay—tell me—did you see anything of the Indians, do you say, as you came back?"

I repeated the incident of being surrounded, and the way in which Tom presented a stalactite to the principal man.

My uncle smiled grimly.

"Tom," he said, "you must look out, or that stalactite will come back with interest. I'm afraid that we English do not give the Indians credit for all the brain they possess. They may have once been a simple, child-like race, but long oppression has roused something more in their breasts. You must look out, lads—look out."

My uncle left us, and Tom started one way, I the other, to look watchfully and carefully round for danger; although, to my way of thinking, it was decidedly a work of supererogation there in broad daylight, with the sun pouring down his intensely bright beams. There was the creeper-overhung verandah on one side, which, at a glance, I could see was untenanted; there, on the other side, was the garden-like plantation, with its gorgeous blossoms and flitting birds. The rows could be easily scanned, and I looked down between them; but it was evident that there was no danger to apprehend nearer than the forest; and I reached one corner of the verandah just as a parrot gave one of its peculiar shrieks, to be answered by another behind me.

I walked on, met, and passed Tom, who remarked upon the improbability of the copperskin showing up again; and then I continued my patrol slowly round the house, past the court-yard, where all was still, and at last found Tom where we had parted from my uncle.

"Seen anything, Tom?" I said.

"Lizard cutting up the verandy, Mas'r Harry, and a bee bird buzzing about over the flowers; nothing else."

I led the way into the room, and Tom followed, to stand at the door, picking his cap, and waiting to be told to come in.

"Don't stand there, Tom," I said; "come in and sit down. You are to be one of the privy councillors."

"All right, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, seating himself close to the door.

My uncle not being in the room, I supposed that he had gone to secure the gold, and walked across to where lay my cut and destroyed leather valise, which I was turning over, when I heard what had never thrilled through the rooms of my uncle's house since I had been there—namely, a light, heart-stirring, silvery-like song, and for a few moments I stood listening, as it came nearer and nearer, till Lilla tripped into the dark room to start, stop short, and then colour up upon finding the place occupied.

The next moment I was by her side restraining her, for she would have darted away, and as I looked in her eyes I could read the story of the

happy little heart rejoicing at being freed from a hateful bondage.

I must give Tom the credit of being a most discreet companion, for he suddenly found that it would be possible to repair my valise, and for the next quarter of an hour he was busily cutting and unpicking the great, coarse stitches.

I was startled from my dreams back to the realities of life, for during that quarter of an hour existence had been bright and golden enough for me, without thinking of anything else; and the gold, the Indians, my uncle—everything had been forgotten, when Mrs. Landell entered the room.

"Have you seen your uncle?" she said to me, rather anxiously.

"Not during the last quarter of an hour or so," I replied. "He left us to come indoors. Go and see if he is in the yard," I said to Tom.

And he went, to return in about five minutes with the news that my uncle had not been there for some time.

"Are you sure he came in?" said my aunt.

"Well, no—not sure," I said—"he left us to come in. But, by the way, aunt, where would my uncle put plate or money that he wanted to keep in safety?"

"Oh, in the strong chest in his little office here," said my aunt, leading the way to a little cupboard of a room just large enough for his desk, a stool, and an old sea-chest, in which he kept his books, and, it seemed, such money as he had not in use.

But my uncle had evidently not been there, for the door was closed; and, after a moment's thought, Mrs. Landell remembered that her husband had not asked her for the key, which was in her pocket.

We waited ten minutes, after which both Tom and I went out to make fresh inquiries, but without avail; then, pausing in the doorway, Tom said to me, in a loud tone—

"Mas'r Harry, you always laughed at me, and said I was making bugbears; but we've been watched and dogged ten times as much as you think for."

"Perhaps so, Tom," I said, moodily.

"And I don't want to make no more bugbears now," continued Tom; "but I'm sure as if some one told me, or as if I saw it all myself, that your uncle's been dropped on, and they've got him and the gold too this time, Mas'r Harry."

"Absurd, Tom! Why, he had not half a dozen yards to go."

"Then they was half a dozen yards too many," said Tom, sullenly. "We didn't ought to have left him, Mas'r Harry."

"But you don't for a moment think—"

"No, Mas'r Harry, I don't; but I feel quite sure as they've burked him, and got him away with them bars of gold. You see if they haven't now!"

It seemed so improbable that I was disposed to laugh; but I felt the next instant that it could be no laughing matter, and with a feeling of anxiety at my heart that would not be driven away, I turned to enter the house just as there was a noise and confusion in the yard, and, to my surprise, old Senor Xeres, the notary and banker, was assisted into the hacienda, closely followed by his attendant, both bleeding freely.

Tom looked meaningly at me, and the next minute we were helping to bear the old Spaniard to a couch, when, his wounds being roughly bound up and a stimulant given, he told us in tolerable English that, about three miles from the hacienda, while on his way to the nearest town, he had been set upon suddenly, and, in spite of the resistance offered by himself and servant, they had been roughly treated, and the gold entrusted to him by Pablo Garcia had been taken away.

Again Tom gave me a meaning look, and I wondered whether the thoughts which suggested those looks could be correct.

"Was Senor Garcia with you?" I said, at last.

"No," said the notary; "he left us within ten minutes of our quitting this house, or he might have helped us to beat the scoundrels off. Only think, senor—two hundred and five ounces of pure gold!"

"For which you are answerable?" I said, inquiringly.

"No, no," said the notary. "I would not take it to be answerable, only at the Senor Don Garcia's risk."

"But why does not your uncle come back, Harry?" said my aunt, uneasily. "He would not be out of the way now unless there was something very particular to keep him."

"We'll go and have another look, aunt," I said. "We may find him somewhere in the plantation."

Signing to Tom to follow, I walked out to stand beneath the verandah till Tom joined me.

"They've got it all back again, Mas'r Harry, safe," said Tom, gloomily, as soon as he stood facing me. I did not answer.

"And we shall have to look pretty sharp to get the rest away," he continued, prophetically.

"Never mind the gold, Tom," I said, with a strange, uneasy feeling troubling me. "Let us first see what has become of my uncle."

CHAPTER XXXIII.—MISSING.

GOING out to one of the sheds across the yard, I called together the Indians who were regularly employed as labourers on the farm, and told them that their master was wanted directly on business, requesting them all to spread themselves over the cultivated land, and to try and find him.

To my utter astonishment, the elder of the party raised one hand with the palm outwards, uttered a few words, and one and all the Indians returned to their work.

"They didn't understand you, Mas'r Harry," said Tom. "Tell them again."

I spoke to the men once more, but they maintained a gloomy silence. Then, and then only, I resorted to threats, to find a wonderful unanimity of purpose amongst them, for every man's hand in an instant was on his knife, and they were evidently prepared to offer a fierce resistance.

"Come away, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, uneasily; "we don't want no fighting now; but this seems rum, the men turning like that all of a sudden."

"I'm afraid that there's a sort of Freemasonry existing amongst them, Tom," I said, "and these men are evidently under orders. But let us see

whether my uncle has returned, for I begin to be afraid that this gold is about to bring a curse with it."

"I don't believe in no curses, Mas'r Harry; but we aint agoing to be allowed to get it away without a deal of dodging, and perhaps a scrimmage. They've got part of it back, Mas'r Harry, but I don't think they'll get the big lot unless we go and show them where we've stowed it away."

I hurried into the house to find that the old notary had fallen asleep, while my aunt was uneasily walking about.

"Have you found him, Harry?" she exclaimed.

"Not yet, aunt. I thought he might have returned."

Without waiting to hear her reply I ran back to Tom, who was watching the Indians.

"Look here, Mas'r Harry," he exclaimed. "Here's just the very spot where we left your uncle, isn't it?"

"Yes," I said.

"Well, this is just in view of those Indian chaps, and so is the way into the house all in full view of them."

"Quite right, Tom."

"Well, nothing couldn't have taken place without them seeing it. But something did take place, and I'll tell you why. If Mas'r Landell had only walked off somewhere to see how his coffee or cocoa was growing, and where it wanted hoeing up, do you think that Muster Indian there would have been above saying so? Not he, Mas'r Harry. But what does he do now? Why, he turns stunt, and won't answer a word; and what does that show, eh? Why, that, as I said before, we didn't ought to have left your poor uncle, who's been knocked on the head and robbed, and then hidden away. Well, do you know what we've got to do now, Mas'r Harry?"

"Search for him, of course," I said, emphatically.

"To be sure, and both together, or we may get knocked on the head too; and I shouldn't like that on account of Sally Smith and Miss—"

"Tom," I said, "your tongue runs too fast. Let us have more action. Come along. And as to your knocking on the head work, we have nothing to fear there so long as we have no gold about us."

"Gently there, Mas'r Harry," said Tom. "We've got no gold about us, I know; but how many people know that, eh? Well, I'll tell you—*two*; and I'm one, and you're the other. You keep a sharp look-out, and don't you trust nobody at all with a red skin, and only two or three who have got white."

As we conversed, we kept on advancing towards the plantation rows, when Tom stooped down, so as to gaze intently at the ground, and then trotted slowly along, as if seeking for a place where the grass was broken down—an example I followed, to halt at length, with the Indians watching me intently from the shed, as I reached a spot nearly opposite to the part of the verandah where I had parted with my uncle.

"Come here, Tom!" I said, in a loud voice; and he ran up. "What do you think of this?"

"Been beaten down, and then smoothed over again," said Tom, excitedly. "Something has been dragged over here, Mas'r Harry."

"So I thought, Tom!" I exclaimed. "Now let us try whether an Englishman can follow a trail;

for it looks as if my uncle must have] passed along here."

There was evidently a display of some little excitement amongst the Indians in the shed as we took our first steps along a well-marked track.

"They saw it, Mas'r Harry!" exclaimed Tom. "Look at 'em."

I did not answer, for my eyes were glued to the track, which now showed plainly that a body had been dragged along through the tender herbage in a perfectly straight line; and I was not long in perceiving that the track went in the direction of the little wood where Lilla had had her terrible adventure with the snake.

The affair began to show now in blacker colours each moment; and I shuddered at last as I stopped short, and pointed to a plainly-to-be-seen smear upon a broad frond.

"Blood, Mas'r Harry!" exclaimed Tom, hoarsely; and then I heard him mutter to himself—"Poor Mas'r Landell!"

We pushed on, to find the same track still; the heavy body that had been dragged over the young plantation growth, leaving it bruised and broken beyond the elastic power of the plants to recover themselves. Twice over the track made a sudden turn, as if he who made it had sought to avail himself of an inequality in the ground; and then, once more, it went right away for the forest, in whose depths it disappeared.

Twice more we had both shuddered as we observed the faint smears of blood upon some leaf; but there was a stern determination in my breast to see the adventure to the end; for I felt that it was to a great extent due to me that my uncle had been stricken down—for stricken down he must have been, I now felt sure.

Following Tom's example, I drew and cocked a pistol; and then we pushed aside the foliage, which grew densely as soon as we had passed through the plantation, moving forward cautiously, and expecting to see an enemy spring up from every tuft of thick growth.

"Why, the trail goes right down where the snake went, Mas'r Harry," cried Tom, suddenly.

"Towards the river, Tom," I said, huskily; for it was now plain enough; and my heart seemed to stand still, and my breath to come in gasps, as my imagination conjured up horror after horror that must have befallen the free, generous-hearted man who had ever given me so warm a welcome to his home.

"Keep a sharp look-out, Mas'r Harry," whispered Tom, as twice over a rustling amongst the bushes and swamp-loving grass told of something rapidly retreating towards the river.

Then once more the trail turned off, and it was plain enough to see that it was now pointing right for the thick reed and cane brake where we had slain the jaguar; and my heart told me plainly enough that, if this track had been made by some one dragging my uncle's body, it was in order to dispose of it in the great reptile-haunted stream.

There was a strangely strong inclination to stay back, and leave Tom to finish the adventure; but with an effort I crushed it down; and now, close

abreast, we crept on, pushing the reeds and canes aside as we entered the brake, sinking to our knees at every stride, and feeling to our horror that the ooze beneath our feet was alive with little reptiles.

"Make haste, Tom!" I cried, shuddering in spite of my efforts to crush down the tremor I felt.

Tom responded to my words, and we were pushing and forcing our way on, when the horror that was oppressing me would have its way, and—be it boyish, unmanly, what you will—I gave vent to a cry, torn from me by the extreme dread I felt as my further progress was stayed by something, invisible to me amongst the thick reeds, suddenly seizing me by the leg.

CHAPTER XXXIV.—MY UNCLE'S ADVENTURE.

"LET me get a shot at him, Mas'r Harry!" cried Tom, excitedly. "Hold up—don't go down, whatever you do. It's one of them great beasts—I know it is. There's thousands of 'em here."

As if to prove the truth of Tom's words, one of the monsters dashed, half running, half wallowing, by us; while, completely unnerved, I could do nothing but stand motionless, as Tom beat the canes aside and tried to get a clear view of that which held me.

"Why, Mas'r Harry!" he exclaimed, in tones I could hardly understand, "who ever saw such a game as this?"

Tom's words brought me to myself, and, looking down, I found that which clasped me so tightly was a man's hand—my uncle's.

Angry with myself for my cowardice, the next moment I was down upon my knees, helping to extricate him from the position in which he lay, with one arm still bound to his side, and the dark cloth garment, from which Tom had shaken the gold, bound round and round his head and face, effectually gagging him; and if the intention of his captors had been to suffocate him, they had nearly effected their purpose.

"Uncle!" I exclaimed, as I held his head up, and he began to draw his breath more freely.

"I thought it was all over, my boy, when I heard your voice," he said, faintly, and evidently not without considerable effort.

With some difficulty we got him upon his legs; but until we had thoroughly chafed them he could not take a step, so tight had been the bonds with which he had been confined.

But at last he seemed to exert himself to the utmost; and, sometimes leaning on Tom's arm, sometimes on mine, we went slowly along the track we had made to the great prostrate tree, where, after a hasty glance around to make certain that no serpents were in the way, we sat down to rest, and my uncle, unasked, began to speak.

"I must sit down for a few minutes, my lad," he said, "and then we will make haste on, for those women must not be left for an instant more than we can help. The gold has all gone, though, Harry."

"Uncle," I exclaimed, "it seems as if my thirst for gold is bringing down a curse upon your peaceful home."

"Not so fast, lad—not so fast. Gold is a very good thing in its way, and helped me this morning

out of a terrible difficulty. Remember that it set me free from Garcia."

"And they've got it all back from him again," chuckled Tom.

"What!" exclaimed my uncle.

"Knocked the poor old lawyer about and grabbed all the bars," said Tom.

My uncle seemed astonished at the news, but his brow knit the next minute.

"Never mind, Harry," he said, "we'll risk the curses of the gold. I'll help you, my lad, to the last gasp; and if we don't get the treasure safe on board some vessel bound for old England, it shan't be for want of trying. But you must give me time, lad—you must give me time; for what with Garcia's bullet and this blow on the head, I'm as weak as a child."

"But how was it, uncle?" I exclaimed, anxiously.

"Give me your arm, lad, and let's make haste back to the hacienda. You, Tom, keep that pistol in your hand cocked, and walk close behind; and if you see one of those lurking copper-skinned jump up, shoot him down without mercy. You know how you both left me to go into the house, where I meant to put the gold into a chest in my little office? Well, I stood looking at you for a few moments, Hal, and then I had taken a step forward, when I felt myself dashed to the ground by a tremendous blow upon the head; hundreds of lights danced before my eyes, and then all was darkness, from which I came to myself with the sensation of being suffocated by something bound over my face. I felt, too, that my hands and arms were tightly bound, and that I was quite helpless, for I could not cry out. I did not feel much troubled, though, for a heavy, sleepy feeling was on me. All I wanted was to be left alone, while, instead of that, I could feel that I was being dragged slowly along over the ground; and then, at last, came a stoppage, and I knew that I was alone."

My uncle stopped for a few minutes, apparently exhausted; but he soon recovered himself, and went on—

"I struggled hard to get at liberty; but, do all I would, I could only get one hand and arm loose as far as the elbow, while as to freeing my legs and face, that I soon found to be impossible; and as I lay there, I could feel that the muddy ooze was all in motion beneath me with the spawn of those great alligators of the river."

"Wur-r-r-a!" ejaculated Tom, in a long shudder.

"Over and over again I felt something crawl over me, and once something seized me, gave me a shake, and then left go; but the height of my horror was reached when I felt slowly gliding and coiling upon me what must have been one of the water boas. I could feel it gradually growing heavier and heavier with the great thick folds lying upon my chest, my legs, and even up to my throat, till the sense of suffocation was horrible, and I lay momentarily expecting to be wrapped in the monster's folds, and crushed to death, till suddenly I felt every part of the monster's body in motion, and that it was gliding off me, for the sense of the crushing weight was going. For a moment I thought it was to enable the beast to seize me, but the next instant I knew

what it meant, for I could faintly hear voices, which I rightly judged to have scared the beast away. Then something touched me as I heard indistinctly the voices close by, and with what little strength I had left I clutched at whatever it was, and you know the rest."

By this time we had reached the edge of the plantation, and I was glancing anxiously towards the hacienda in dread lest anything should have happened to the casket containing the object that made gold pale into worthless metal in my imagination. But so far, all appeared at peace. It was drawing towards evening, and the shadows were lengthening, but the whole place seemed to be sleeping in the gorgeous yellow sunlight, so still and placid looked all around.

Still, indeed! for an ominous change met us upon our reaching the courtyard. Every Indian labourer, male and female, had gone, and the place was silent and deserted.

"The rats desert the sinking ship, Harry," said my uncle, huskily. "For heaven's sake run in and see if all is well: I dare go no farther."

I needed no second bidding to rush in and hurry to the room where the wounded Spaniards had lain, to find it deserted.

With a strange clutching at the heart I ran to the inner room and called Lilla by name, when, to my intense delight, she answered, and with my aunt, weak and trembling, she came forth.

We soon learned the cause of the silence about the place. Shortly after I had taken my departure, Senor Xeres had roused up from the short sleep in which he had sank, to express his determination to recommence his journey, declaring that he had nothing now to lose; while, half an hour after, Lilla had seen through one of the verandahs the whole of the labourers glide silently away towards the forest, and then a silence as of death had fallen upon the hacienda.

CHAPTER XXXV.—THE ATTACK ON THE HACIENDA.

"HARRY," said my uncle, about sundown, "if I could do as I liked, I should rest my cuts and bruises for a few days; but as it is, I cannot give up. Now look here, my lad—here, you Tom Bulk, don't shrink away, man—this is as much for your ears as for his. I've been thinking this over, and from what I know of the Indians, I'm quite sure that they mean mischief. It seems hard, but I fear that there will be a fierce attack upon this place before many hours are past; and then, unless we can beat them off, ours will be a bad case. You two must see to the closing up of the bottom of the place, and doing what you can to put it in a state of defence."

"Uncle," I said, "is not this almost madness? Here we are, only three men. How, then, can we defend such a house as this?"

"It is our only hope," he said, gloomily. "If we had your treasure here, we might try to escape down the river; but as it is, we'll fight to the last, and then take to the woods."

"And the cave, eh, Mas'r Landell?" said Tom.

"Tom," I cried, joyfully, "why, that would indeed be a place of refuge when all here failed."

"Yes," said my uncle, thoughtfully, "I did not think of that. Such a place might indeed be useful for a retreat, if we could take with us provisions. But now see about this place. I will not leave here yet—not until we are obliged."

In obedience to his wishes, though with an aching heart, I set to bolting and barring, closing shutters, and providing one or two windows that commanded likely points of assault with mattresses, over which we could fire. But all the while I knew well enough that, with anything like a daring attack, the place must be carried directly. The great dread I had, though, was of fire, which I knew would prove the most formidable of adversaries—for a brand applied to one of the posts of the verandah would be sufficient to ensure the total destruction of the light, sundried, wooden building.

Meanwhile, on returning, I found that my uncle had nearly forgotten his pains, and was busily arranging such firearms as we had—ample, as it happened; for there were five guns, and he had a couple of brace of pistols, besides those with which we were provided. Ammunition, too, was in fair quantity; while, one way or another, our little garrison could boast of plenty of provision.

"No sleep to-night, Harry," said my uncle, cheerfully. "We must all watch, for the Indians will not be satisfied till they have thoroughly ransacked the place."

"Of course we shall beat them off if possible; but what arrangements have you made for retreat?" I said.

Without a word, my uncle led me into the kitchen of the hacienda, where he had stabled four mules, with plenty of fodder.

"We must get off unseen if we can, my lad," he said, "and the mules will carry plenty of ammunition and food. But about water?"

"Plenty at the cavern," I said.

"Good!" exclaimed my uncle. "And now look here, Harry," he said, leading me to the inner room, and taking down a map, "show me, as nearly as you can, where the cavern lies which contains all this rich treasure."

I examined the map as carefully as I could, and then pointed out the valley in which it seemed to me that, if the map were correct, the cavern must lie.

"You say there is water?" said my uncle—"a stream?"

"Yes, a little rivulet."

"Then that must run down to this river. Good! And here again this river joins the great Apure, which, in its turn, runs into the Orinoco. Once well afloat, we should be pretty safe, and we could reach the mouth of the great river, and from there Georgetown, Demerara. Why, Harry, it could not be above a dozen miles from the mouth of your cave to the waterway that should see us safe on the road homeward."

"But about canoes, uncle?" I said.

"Canoes, my boy? Well, of course it would be well to have them; but we must not be particular. I have known voyages made on skin rafts before now; and recollect this, that we shall have the stream to bear us along the whole distance. But

there, after all, we may be alarming ourselves without cause."

Tom and I exchanged glances at the mention of the skin raft, and then we prepared to spend the watchful night.

"I need not hint to you, Hal, about trying to protect poor Lilla," said my uncle, in tones that bespoke his emotion.

"No," I said, quietly.

And my look, I suppose, must have satisfied Lilla, for I received one in return full of trust and confidence in the efforts of my weak arm.

Night at last—beautiful, though anxious night, with the sky deepening from blue to purple, to black, with the diamond-like stars spangling the deep robe of nature till it glistened with their glorious sheen. Around us on every side was the forest, in a greater or less depth, and from it came the many nocturnal sounds—sounds with which I was pretty familiar, but which, upon this occasion, had a more strange and oppressive effect than usual. Boom, whizz, croak, shriek, yell, and moan, mingled with the distant rush of the great river, ever speeding onward towards the sea. At times, I could just distinguish the edge of the forest; then there would be the dark plantation spread around, and nothing more.

It was weary work that, watching—stationed at one of the windows—watching till my eyes ached, as I tried to distinguish the many familiar objects by which I was surrounded, and then to make sure that some low bush was not a crouching or crawling enemy, approaching by stealth nearer and nearer, ready for a deadly spring.

It was just the time for anxious, troubled thought, and the gold lay like a dead weight upon my conscience. At that moment I could have gladly given it all, wherewith to purchase safety for those beneath this roof.

I was startled from anxious reverie by a whisper at my side, and turning, I found that it was Lilla, the bearer of a message from my uncle that he would like me to come to him for a few minutes.

I had scarcely mastered the message, standing there close to the open window, and clasping Lilla's hand in mine, when the words upon my lips were arrested, and my heart beat fast, as now unmistakably, no chimera of the brain, I could see six or seven figures glide out of the darkness towards the verandah, straight to where I stood with Lilla.

Nearer they came, stooping down and apparently making for the shade of the verandah, till they stopped within a couple of yards of us, and began whispering in what seemed to be broken Spanish, or the *patois* of the Indians. Then I felt my hands clutched more tightly than ever, as a voice that I recognized in an instant uttered a few words that sounded like an order, given as it was in a tongue very little of which I could comprehend, catching only a word or two, while my imagination supplied the rest.

It was plain enough that, perhaps ignorant of his loss, perhaps condoning it, Garcia had made common cause with the Indians, and Lilla was to be saved before fire was applied to the hacienda.

For a few moments there was a dead silence, and then the party glided along under the verandah.

"What was that Garcia said?" I then whispered to Lilla.

I knew that my interpretation must have been pretty correct, from the start Lilla gave, and then her shudder.

"I dare not tell you," she said, with a half sob.

And then leaving the window, after softly closing and securing it, we hurried, hand in hand, to my uncle.

"How long you have been," he whispered.

"There was a party of six or seven by my window," I said, "Garcia heading them."

"Then I was right!" he exclaimed, anxiously. "I thought—"

The next moment my hand was upon his lips; for, dimly seen through the narrow aperture left, from which my uncle watched, were four dark figures; while at the same moment there was a sharp cracking noise, as of breaking woodwork, from another part of the house.

"Am I to shoot, or aint I? Is Mas'r Harry there?" whispered a voice from out of the darkness. "Because they're trying to break in here."

"You must fire, Tom," said my uncle, huskily; "and mind this, if they do break in, our only hope is the kitchen, which is stone-built and strong. Make your way there."

"Right, Mas'r Landell," said Tom, coolly.

And then we heard him glide off.

"Lilla, join your mother in there," I heard my uncle then whisper.

But before the little hand I clasped could be withdrawn, I had held the trembling girl for a moment to my breast, and our lips for a brief instant had met.

Then I knew we were alone.

"Harry," said my uncle, "it seems to me that we ought to have beaten a retreat; but it is too late to talk of that. Our only hope now is, by giving them a sharp reception. If we can keep them at bay till daylight, we shall have a better opportunity of escaping."

"I don't agree with you," I said. "I think our hopes should be in the darkness."

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Far West:

A TALE OF A TREASURE.

CHAPTER XXXVI.



AWING near to the window, my remarks were cut short by the sharp report of a gun, followed in a few seconds by another, when the crashing noise, evidently made by the tearing down of the jalousie bars at one window, suddenly ceased, and a loud shriek rang out upon the night air.

We neither of us spoke, as we listened attentively, to hear the next moment the sound made by a ramrod

in a gun-barrel, and we knew that Tom was safe.

"They've gone from my window now, Mas'r Landell," whispered a voice at our elbow; "and they won't come back there, I think, seeing how hot it was. But harkey, there, isn't that them trying somewhere else?"

There was no mistaking the sound. Strong hands were striving to tear down a jalousie at the other end of the house; and, hurrying there, my uncle fired, just as several dimly seen dark figures were beating in the window.

"Crack—crack!" two sharp reports from my uncle's gun; but this time, as their flashes lit up the room where we stood, the fire was replied to by half a dozen pieces, but fortunately without effect.

Then again fell silence, with once more the same result, that of a breaking jalousie at an upstairs window.

"They've swarmed up the verandah posts, lads," said my uncle, thickly; "but you two stay by your windows—you at this, Harry; you, Tom, at the other."

We heard him steal away to the staircase, and then Tom left my side. The next minute came a loud report from upstairs, then a crash, as of a falling body on the lattice-work of the verandah, and directly after a dull thud outside the window.

I had no time for thought, though, for incidents now began to succeed each other with such startling rapidity. As the dull thud came upon the bricks beneath the verandah, it seemed to me that the darkness outside the window before which I stood was gradually growing deeper. Another instant, and I knew the reason as I levelled my heavily-loaded double gun.

Was I to destroy life? my heart seemed to ask me, but only for the reply to come instantly. Yes, if I wished to help and save the women beneath our

charge; and then I drew rapidly, one after the other, both triggers. There was a gurgling, gasping cry, and the darkness grew less dense.

"Crack—crack!" both barrels again from Tom's part of the house. It was evident, then, that we had neither of us returned to our old posts too soon.

I hastily reloaded, wondering from whence would come the next attack; but I had not long to wait, for three or four sharp discharges came through the window, striking the plaster of wall and ceiling, so that it crumbled down upon me in showers.

Again and again I trembled for those in the kitchen; but the recollection of my uncle's words encouraged me; and, trusting in the strength of its stone walls, I began to grow excited, firing and loading, till all at once, as if by common consent, there was a cessation of the discharges, followed by an ominous silence.

CHAPTER XXXVII.—FLIGHT AND ITS ARREST.

I WOULD have given anything to have left my post just then, so as to have seen after the welfare of those who were anxiously awaiting the result of the attack; but I felt that such a proceeding might prove dangerous, and an entry be made during my brief absence.

But a minute had not elapsed before my uncle was at my side.

"They are all safe in the kitchen, Harry," he said. "But what does this mean?"

"Only a minute or two's cessation before they make a fiercer attack," I said.

"No 'taint," said Tom, who had stolen up unobserved; "they're agoing to set us alight, and I've come to tell you."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed my uncle. "They'll never burn the place till they have searched and plundered it."

"I quite think with you, uncle," I said.

"But they're a striking lights round my side," said Tom. "Come and look!"

We hurriedly passed round to Tom's post just in time to see the truth of his words, for as we peered cautiously from his window, there was a little flickering tongue of flame apparently dancing towards one end of an outhouse. Then it was applied to the thatched roof, and a howl of joy arose as the flame ran rapidly up towards the ridge.

Directly after, though, there arose a shout of rage, and more than one voice, so my uncle said, crying out for the fire to be extinguished; amongst which voices that of Garcia could plainly be heard.

The firing was evidently premature, and efforts were directly made to extinguish it.

A glance, though, showed that the efforts would be in vain; for, with a sharp hissing and crackling noise, the light material began to blaze rapidly, and my uncle gave a groan as he saw that his house was doomed to destruction.

A loud voice now shouted what were evidently orders, and a pattering of feet succeeded, as a fierce struggle now began to tear out the blazing part of the outhouse before it reached the hacienda, against whose sides it was reared.

"Now is the time for escaping, uncle," I whispered, as I thought how easily we could have brought

down a dozen or so of our assailants, whose dark figures stood out well against the fire.

"Yes," he said, slowly; "we must make the venture now, for in an hour the old place will be level with the ground."

Then, casting off his lethargy, he hurriedly made for the kitchen, closely followed by Tom and myself, when we closed after us, and thoroughly barricaded, the inner door, while my uncle unfastened and looked out cautiously from that which led into the yard.

All was still on that side—not an enemy to be seen—when, hastily finishing the loading of the mules with the provisions, arms, and ammunition, Lilla was placed on one, my aunt on the other, and we had just determined upon opening the door to start across the yard, when a loud shout told that the enemy had made an entrance, and directly after we could hear footsteps coursing all over the house, as if in search of the gold that they expected to find; whilst one voice, which I twice heard shouting, sent a thrill through my body.

"Quick, uncle!" I exclaimed, "before they find the kitchen door."

"It is almost madness to try and escape, my lad," said my uncle, despondently. "Had we not better fight it out from here?"

"No," I exclaimed, fiercely, as I threw open the door and gave a glance out, to see that this side of the house was in shadow, while a bright light was beginning to illumine the trees around. "No; let us make for the forest. Tom, bring the two pack mules. Uncle, lead the other."

Then taking the bridle of Lilla's mule in one hand, gun in the other, I led the way, trembling all the while with excitement, for we could hear the shouts of the searchers, and, above all, those of Garcia. It seemed that every moment they must be upon us; but all four mules were led out at last, and stood in the black shadow over on that side of the house.

"Don't leave me, Harry!" whispered a voice at my side.

For an instant I wavered, and that instant nearly sealed our fate.

"But for a few moments," I said, huskily.

And I rushed to the kitchen door, dragged out the key, and inserted it on the outer side, with the Indians beating the while at the inner door, which was rapidly giving way, as they seemed now to have determined that it was here we had taken refuge.

Then I had the door to, locked it, and hurled away the key into the plantation, just as, with a crash, the inner door succumbed; and, headed by Garcia, the party of Indians rushed into the kitchen to utter howls of rage and disappointment on finding it empty, and then began battering the door I had that moment locked.

Fortunately for us, the window was strongly barred and locked in another direction; but I knew that some of them must be round directly; and dashing to Lilla's bridle, "Come along!" I whispered, hoarsely, and I led the mule towards the nearest packing shed.

To reach this shed part of our way was in black shadow, the rest across a broad glowing band of light, after which we could hurry along behind two

or three long low coffee sheds, keeping them between us and the fire, when the plantation trees would shelter us, I knew, till we could reach the forest.

"Quick—quick!" I exclaimed. "To the left of the shed!"

The yells behind us were fearful, the light of the fire growing momentarily more intense, for the flames were running swiftly up one side of the house, with the effect of broadening the glowing belt which we had to pass; when, if an eye was turned towards us, or the kitchen door were to give way, I knew that our efforts had been in vain, and that we should be overtaken and surrounded in a minute.

An anxious passage of only a few seconds' duration, and I had led Lilla across, my uncle had followed with Mrs. Landell, and Tom was close behind, when one of his mules turned restive, stopping short in the full glare of the flames, and I felt choking with rage and despair.

There was another shout as the flames shot higher—another shout and another close at hand, with the pattering of feet, to show that the Indians were running round to our side of the house, when I saw Tom stoop for an instant, when his restive mule gave a bound; and then, as a chorus of yells smote our ears, we were once more in the shadow, hurrying along past first one and then another shed, which formed a complete screen, though the glare was momentarily growing brighter.

"I don't like using the point of a knife for a spur, Mas'r Harry," said Tom to me, as, leaving Lilla's bridle once more for a moment, I ran back to urge him on; "but, blame this chap, he was obliged to have it, and he won't turn nasty no more. Never mind me—I'll keep up if I can, and you shall have the stuff I've got. If I can't keep up, why I must be left behind, and you must save the ladies; but don't hang back for me."

I squeezed Tom's hand, and ran back to find Lilla trembling so that she could hardly keep her seat; then as she clung convulsively to my arm, we passed the shadow of the last shed, but not until we had paused for a few moments to listen to the chorus of savage yells in our rear.

"Now, uncle!" I exclaimed.

"But where do you make for?" whispered my uncle.

"The great cave—Tehutlan," I said.

And as I spoke we issued from the friendly shadow and passed on.

It seemed as if that plantation would never be passed, and the friendly shade of the great black forest reached. The yells continued louder than ever, and startling us by proceeding from unexpected spots, which showed us that the Indians, certain now of our evasion, were spreading in all directions.

"Another fifty yards," I whispered to my uncle, over my shoulder, "and then safety."

For the great, dense trees now rose like a large bronzed wall right in front, and, though full of dangers, we were ready enough to dare those sooner than the peril of meeting the fierce, roused party of Indians who sought our lives.

We pushed forward now, heedless of shout and cry, though some of them appeared to come from

close by on our left. There was the forest which was to prove a sanctuary, and, at last, the cocoa-trees were behind, and we were parting the dense growth that now hid from us the glow of the burning house.

"There is a track more to the right, Harry," whispered my uncle.

And, turning in that direction, I hurried the mule, burning as I did to get on the direct route to the cavern. I had whispered a few encouraging words to Lilla, and was then thinking how my locking the kitchen door had retarded the enemy and given us time to escape, when I felt that, worn out and overcome by the excitement and terrors of the night, Lilla had given way and was sinking, fainting, from the saddle.

By an effort, though, I kept her in her place, and whispered to my uncle to take the lead so that our mule might follow.

He did so; and then, with the cries of the searching Indians still ringing in our ears, we pushed on till, under my uncle's guidance, we reached the open track, and I whispered to him the direction we had followed to reach the cave.

"I think if we pursue this track for about a mile, Harry, we can then turn off to the right and reach your track—that is, if we do not lose our way."

So spoke my uncle; and then, all burdened as I was, I levelled my gun, and uttered a warning cry to my companions; for there was a rustling on our left, a heavy panting, and then, with a loud and triumphant yell, a couple of savages sprang out into the dim twilight of the open space where we were standing.

"Let them have us all dead, not living, Hal," said my uncle, his sad tones giving place to those of fierce excitement.

And he, too, levelled his piece just as, with a fresh burst of yells, the savages dashed on.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.—A RIDE BY NIGHT.

TWO loud echoing reports—two dimly seen shadowy figures falling back into the underwood—and then we were hurrying along the track as fast as we could urge the mules.

"There is another track farther on, Harry," said my uncle; "we must reach that."

Onward, then, we went through the gloomy shades, black now as night could make them, not even daring to pause to try whether we could detect the sounds of pursuit. That the reports of our guns would bring the Indians to that spot we had no doubt; but I was hopeful that they might not at first find the bodies of their companions, and if they did not, I knew that all endeavours to trace us by the mule trail until morning would be futile.

Now the way was of pitchy blackness; then an opening would give us a glimpse of the stars. The track was found and pursued for a long distance, and then my uncle called a halt, and we listened for some minutes for tokens of pursuit; but all was now still, save the nocturnal cries of the inhabitants of the wilderness through which we were passing.

Tom standing now close up, my uncle asked me if I thought I could recognize where we were.

I could not; but Tom made a sort of circle, examining some of the great tree trunks around.

"It's all right, Mas'r Harry," he said, "we're on the right track for Goldenland. That's it, straight away there to the left."

"But are you sure, Tom?" I said. "Recollect how important it is that we should be right."

"Well, so I do," said Tom, gruffly. "But there, if you won't believe one donkey, you perhaps will another. Now, lookye here, Mas'r Harry, this here left hand mule of mine is one of them as we took with us to the cave, and we'll have his opinion. If he goes off to the right, I'm wrong; but if he remembers the way and goes off to the left, why it's being a witness in my favour. Now, then, moke, cock them old long ears of yours, and go ahead."

As he spoke, Tom led one of his mules to the front, gave it a clap on the back, and it trotted forward, halted, hesitated for an instant, and then went off down the dark track Tom had declared for.

"Now, who's right, Mas'r Harry?" said Tom, triumphantly, as he halted at the opening into the ravine, just as, far above us, we could see, pale, cold, and stately, mountain peak after mountain peak, whose icy crags were just growing visible, lit by the faint streak in the East, which told of the coming day.

Tom led on again, and by degrees the familiar sides of the ravine became more and more steep and craggy, the way grew narrower, the music of the little rill was audible; and, at last, just as the sun was rising, we reached the rocky barrier of the great cave, and prepared to halt.

But there was no occasion. Tom's left hand mule slowly began to climb the rocks, the second mule followed, as did those ridden by my aunt and Lilla, without word or urging, and we were just congratulating ourselves upon our escape, when Tom, who had crept close to me, as I turned for an instant to peer back along the valley, pointed with one hand towards the left side, where the crags stood out most roughly.

I followed his pointing finger, and then started, as I was just in time to see a dark form, barely visible in the shadow beneath some overhanging rocks, crawl silently away with a stealthy, cat-like motion.

"Jaguar, Tom?" I said, though my heart gave my lips the lie.

"Indian!" said Tom, laconically, and then I knew that our coming would soon be spread through the tribe of those who constituted the guardians of the treasure; for this was evidently one posted as a sentinel, to watch still the sacred place where the treasure might yet again be brought to rest when those who were its enemies should sleep.

CHAPTER XXXIX.—TRACKED.

I WAS obliged to acknowledge that it was more than we could expect to reach the cavern without being discovered, and that we ought to be well content to have gained a haven of safety without loss or injury; but all the same my heart sank, and I had hard work to keep back the feeling of despair that, cold and deadening, came upon me.

The thoughts I have set down here flashed through

my brain almost momentarily, but I was brought back to the necessity for action by a motion now made by Tom.

"Shall I, Mas'r Harry?" he said.

And he covered the retreating Indian with his gun.

"No," I said, arresting him. "It would only be more bloodshed, and would not prevent our being discovered."

The next moment I thought that I was wrong, and that the destruction of that one foe might be our saving. But it was too late now: the Indian had disappeared.

I led the way farther in, till the increasing darkness compelled a halt, and I said a few words of encouragement to the shuddering companions of our travel.

"Tom," I then said—for the thought had that moment struck me—"we have no lights."

Tom did not reply, but plunged into the darkness ahead; when, after a while, we could hear the clinking of flint and steel, followed, after a short interval, by a faint light, towards which one of Tom's mules directly began to walk, closely followed by the rest.

"Is it safe to go on?" said my uncle.

"Quite," I replied. "I don't think any enemies would be here."

I was divided in my opinions as to which way we should go. It was most probable that the Indians would be aware of the existence of the bird-chamber, but would they penetrate to it? I should much rather have made that our retreat; but, at last, I felt that I hardly dared, and that, if I wished for safety, we must take to the rift, beyond the vault of the troubled waters, leaving the mules in the farthest corner, by the arch of the tunnel.

Leading the way, then, they followed me right away into this land of gloom and shadow, my brain being actively employed the while as to our defence of our stronghold.

At last we reached the farthest chamber, below the rocky tongue which projected over the great gulf; and then, after securing the mules, with Tom's help, and to the great astonishment of my uncle, I fitted together the little raft, placed upon it the store of provisions, and then secured it to a piece of rock, ready at any moment for us to embark and continue our retreat along the tunnel; for I had come to the conclusion that it would be better not to expose the women to the terrors of the water-passage, unless absolutely obliged.

Thus prepared for escape, I felt better satisfied; and, after partaking of some refreshment, and urging Lilla and my aunt to try and obtain some rest upon the sandy floor, which was here clean and dry, I whispered to Tom to follow; and this time in the dark, we began to thread our way towards the entrance.

When we had left them about fifty yards behind, we turned to gaze back, to see only the faintest glimmer of the candle they had burning; while, at the end of another minute, there was nothing but black darkness, for the passage had narrowed, and wound round a huge block of stone.

It was slow work, but I wanted to grow more familiar with the way; and, at last, by persevering,

we passed the vault where was the opening to the bird-chamber, and then pressed on till, nearing the entrance, we proceeded with more caution, for I was quite prepared to see a cluster of savages collected in the mouth of the great subterranean way.

The caution was needed, for upon proceeding far enough, we could hear the buzz of voices, and a glance showed me Garcia and a full score of his dark-skinned followers.

In a few moments they crossed the rock barrier, and I could then see that they were all armed with pine splints, and preparing to light them. It was evident, too, that there was a feeling of awe existing amongst the party, many of the savages hanging back till, by fierce and threatening gestures, Garcia forced them farther in.

"He's at the bottom of half the mischief, Mas'r Harry," whispered Tom. "The Indians are after the gold, and he's after Miss Lilla, so they've joined hands. Let me bring him down, Mas'r Harry; there's a good chance now."

My only reply was to lay my hand upon Tom's arm, and then we watched till fire was obtained, the pine torches lit, and, half driven by Garcia, the Indians led the way towards where we crouched.

Compelled thus to retreat, we hurried back for some distance, our part being easy, for we had the black darkness, the knowledge of the way, and the excessively slow, timid advance of the enemy in our favour.

On came the Indians, with their flashing torches lighting up in a beautiful though weird way each passage and vault through which they passed, and still we retreated before them, wondering at their silence; for Garcia's was the only voice heard beyond a whisper, and even his was subdued, as if the gloomy grandeur had some little influence upon his mind.

Twice over there was a halt, and we soon saw that the Indians were striving to return, till by violent threats and expostulations, Garcia once more had them in motion.

I did not wish to shed blood, otherwise we could have brought down enemy after enemy at our leisure, while I could not but think that the loss of one or two of the party would have produced a panic. There was still, though, this for a last resource; and I kept feeling hopeful that the party would return, or else take the way which led to the bird-chamber.

My latter surmises were correct; for, upon crossing the large vault, and gaining a good post of observation, we saw the Indians stop short and elevate their torches, pointing out the opening which led to the great guano-filled chasm, when Garcia placed six men there, evidently as sentinels, and collecting the rest made a tour of the vault, and then pointed down the rift where Tom and I were hidden—the passage which led to the great gulf.

"No, no, no!" chorused the Indians, giving vent to their negative in a wild, despairing fashion.

And directly they all threw themselves upon their knees upon the rocky floor, and began to crawl back.

Garcia raged and stormed, but it soon became evident that if he explored the passage where we

were, it must be alone. Superstitious dread was evidently at the bottom of it all, and I breathed more freely as I felt that for the present, unless he could overcome his companions' terror, we were safe.

The Indians seemed to be willing enough, though, to pursue the other route; for as soon as they went back to their six fellows, they began pointing up at the dark passage, and gesticulating, when, feeling probably that he must submit, Garcia changed the position of his sentinels, intending, apparently, to leave them to guard the passage where we were. But here again there was a new difficulty: when the men found that the others were to depart, they refused at once to be left alone; and, at last, after striking one of them down, Garcia had to submit, and sprang up the rocks, torch in hand, followed by all but two, the stricken man and another, who hastily retreated towards the mouth of the cavern.

CHAPTER XL.—ILLAPA.

WE were safe yet, and I felt much encouraged as I thought of what an advantage we, as defenders, possessed in the darkness over an attacking party advancing light in hand. The sight, too, of the superstitious terror of the Indians was cheering, and I again felt assured that should Garcia persevere in his determination to search our part of the cave, he must seek other companions or else come alone.

"Tom," I said then, gently, "we have been away some time now: creep back to my uncle and tell him quietly that the Indians are in the cave, but that at present there is no danger to fear. Ask him, though, to put out the candle in case they should come this way."

Tom made no answer, but crept away directly, leaving me in that thick darkness watching for the return of the enemy, and wondering whether we should succeed in getting safely away.

My heart sank as I thought of our peril, with the cunning of the savage and the European mingled to fight against us; while, as to our position, we could set them, I was sure, at defiance here, but could we escape to the river? I still hoped that they would not penetrate our part, forcing us to take to the raft; and at times I began to wonder whether it would not be better to resist their entrance for the sake of saving the mules, unless we could compel them to swim after the raft.

My reverie was broken by the return of Tom.

"All right, Mas'r Harry," he said, "they're in the dark now; but I think Miss Lilla was disappointed because you didn't go. I'll keep watch if you'd like to."

If I'd like to! I fought down the desire, though, just as a distant echoing murmur, ever increasing, fell upon our ears, and we knew that the searchers were on their way back.

Another minute, and, with their last torch burning dimly, they were scrambling down from the rift to the cavern chamber, and then hurrying away as fast as the obscurity would allow.

The hours glided by, and at last it became manifest that there was to be no further search that night; so, with Tom, I cautiously made my way to the

mouth of the cavern, to find that the enemy had made their bivouac just by the barrier, a bright fire illumining the broad arch, and ruddying the swarthy faces that clustered round, some standing, some lying about upon the sand, while a couple were evidently sentries, and stood motionless, a little farther in, gazing towards the interior of the cave.

"No more visitors to-night," whispered Tom.

And together we crept back—no light task—through the densely black maze; but at last we felt our way to where we had watched, when Tom, undertaking to be the first guard, I continued my journey to where Lilla, wearied out, was fast sleeping in her mother's arms.

I told my uncle how we were situated, and then, after partaking of the refreshment he offered me, I lay down for a couple of hours' sleep; but I'm afraid I far exceeded it before I awoke with a start to try and recall where we were. A quarter of an hour after, though, I was at Tom's side, to find that he had twice been to the cave mouth to see the sentries still posted, and the rest of the Indian party sleeping round the fire.

I should think that four hours must have elapsed, and then, at one and the same moment, I heard Tom's whisper behind me, and saw the distant glimmer of approaching lights.

"Look out, Mas'r Harry!"

The lights grew brighter moment by moment; and then we could see once more the party of Indians coming slowly forward, headed by Garcia, upon whose fierce face the torch he carried flashed again and again.

But it soon became evident that the Indians were advancing very unwillingly; and more than once when, alarmed by the light, one of the great birds went flapping and screaming by, there was a suppressed yell, and the men crowded together, as if for mutual protection.

At last they stood together in the centre of the vault; and Garcia made a hasty survey, pausing at last by the passage, where we watched him hold up his light and peer down it, and then turn to his companions.

The conversation we could not understand, but it was evident that Garcia was urging them to follow him, and that they refused.

"Say, Mas'r Harry," whispered Tom, "why, if we could be in the bird-chamber, and fire off both guns, how those niggers would cut and run like a lot of schoolboys!"

"Hist!" I said, softly.

For Garcia was now evidently appealing most strongly to one who appeared to be the leader of the Indians—a tall, bronzed Hercules of a fellow, who pointed, waved his arms about, and made some long reply.

"I'd give something to understand all that, Mas'r Harry," whispered Tom.

"He says that, if the senor's enemies and the searchers for the sacred treasure are in this direction, the great spirit who dwells in this part of the cave has flown with them down into the great hole that reaches right through the world."

"Uncle!" I exclaimed, as he whispered these words close to our ears.

"I was uneasy about you, Harry," he replied. "But who is that—Garcia? Ah, he will never get the Indians to come here! They dread this gloomy place, and believe it is full of the departed souls of their tribe. I have heard that they will never come beyond a certain point, and this must be the point."

Standing where we did, we could plainly see all that was taking place, even to the working of the excited countenances. Garcia was evidently furious with disappointment, and, as my uncle afterwards informed me, spared neither taunt nor promise in his endeavours to get the Indians forward; telling them that they risked far more from their gods by leaving the treasure-takers unpunished than by going in there after them. He told them that they must proceed now—that it was imperative; and as he spoke in a low, deep voice, it gave us a hint as to our own remarks, for the cavern was like some great whispering gallery, and his words came plainly to us, though few of them were intelligible to my ear.

All his efforts, though, were in vain; and the Indians were apparently about to return, when Garcia made a last appeal.

"No," said the Indian, who was evidently the leader; "we have done our part. We have chased them to the home of the great god Illapa, and he will punish them. They took away the great treasure, but have they not brought it back? It would be offending him, and bringing down his wrath upon us, if we did more. If the treasure-seekers should escape, then we would seize them; but they will not, for yonder is the great void where Illapa dwells; and those who in olden times once dared to go as far, were swallowed up in the great home of thunder."

The Indian spoke reverently, and with a display of dignity, beside which the rage and gesticulations of Garcia looked contemptible.

As a last resource it seemed to strike him that he would once more have the bird-chamber searched, and, appealing to the Indians, they unwillingly climbed up to the ledge once more, and, torch in hand, disappeared through the rift, leaving Garcia, torch in one hand and pistol in the other, guarding the passage where we crouched; now walking to and fro, now coming close up to enter a few yards, holding his light above his head; but darkness and silence were all that greeted him. I trembled, though, lest he should hear the whinnying of the mules, which, though distant, might have reached to where he stood. At last, to our great relief, he stepped back into the vault, and began to pace to and fro.

For full two hours Garcia walked impatiently up and down there by the torch he had stuck in the sand at the mouth of the passage, and then came the murmurs of the returning voices of the savages, accompanied by shriek after shriek of the frightened birds, scared by the lights which were intruding upon their domain.

As the searching party descended, Garcia hurried towards them, seeing evidently at a glance that they had no tidings, but now using every art he could command to persuade the chief to follow him. He pointed and gesticulated, asserting apparently that he felt a certainty of our being in the farther

portion of the passage, where his torch was stuck. But always there was the same grave courtesy, mingled with a solemnity of demeanour, as if the subject of the inner cavern was not to be approached without awe.

"We are safe, Harry," my uncle breathed in my ear at last.

For it was evident that, satisfied that their work was done, the Indians were about to depart, when, apparently half mad with rage and disappointment, Garcia cocked the pistols he had in his belt, replaced them, and then, gun in one hand and torch in the other, he strode towards the passage, evidently with the intention of exploring it alone.

The next moment a wild and mournful cry arose from the savage party, while their chief seemed staggered at Garcia's boldness, but recovering himself, he dashed forward, caught the half breed by the arm, and strove to drag him back.

CHAPTER XLI.—TAKING A PRISONER.

A FIERCE struggle ensued, during which, for a few moments, the Indian proved the stronger. Garcia's torch was extinguished, and the savage held him by claspings his arms tightly round his waist. Then, with an effort, Garcia shook his adversary off, snatched up a torch stuck in the sand, and was already half a dozen yards down the passage, with our party in full retreat, when, with a yell of horror, the chief bounded after him, overtook him, and the struggle began anew.

An instant more, and Garcia's gun exploded, raising a roar of thundering echoes that was absolutely terrific. Rolling volley after volley seemed to follow one another with the rapidity of thought, the very cavern appeared about to be crushed in, and, as we paused for an instant to gaze back, we could see the chief and all his followers upon their knees, their faces bent to the sand, and a dismal wailing chorus of "Illapa! Illapa! Illapa!"—the Indians' name for the god of thunder—could be fairly heard mingling with the rolling of the echoes.

The chief was in the same position, with a burning torch close to his head, one which Garcia now seized, and stood for a moment hesitating, as he gazed at the prostrate figures behind.

Would he dare to come on? or would he retreat? were now the questions we asked ourselves.

The answer came in an instant, for Garcia was coming slowly on. He paused for a few minutes when he reached the spot where we had watched from, and, stooping behind the rocks, he reloaded his piece; then, with his light above his head and his gun held ready, he pressed on, lighting us, though we were invisible to him, as we kept about fifty yards in advance.

Twice over Tom wanted to fire; but he was restrained, for we hoped that, moment by moment, Garcia would hesitate and turn back. But no; there was still the fierce, Satanic face, with its retiring forehead and shortly-cut black hair, glistening in the torchlight, ever coming forward out of the darkness, peering right and left, the torch now held down to seek for footprints in the sand, now to search behind some mass of crags.

On came the light nearer and nearer, illumining

the gloomy passage, and sending before it the dark shadows of the rocks in many a grotesque form.

From where I stooped, I could just catch sight of the sardonic face, with its rolling eyes, which scanned every cranny and crag. Twenty yards—ten yards—five yards—he was close at hand now, when, from far off, came the low whinny of a mule, followed directly by another.

In an instant Garcia stopped short to listen. Then the sardonic smile upon his face grew more pronounced, and, casting off his hesitation, he once more stepped forward nearer—nearer, till his torch, elevated as it was, shed its light upon us. But he did not yet distinguish us from the rock around, and the next two steps bore him past, when his eye fell upon the flash of light from my gun-barrel, and, with an ejaculation in Spanish, he turned upon me, and we were face to face. But ere his heart could have made many pulsations, Tom's coat was over his face, the torch fell to the ground, to lie burning feebly upon the soil, there was a fierce struggle, and the swaying to and fro of wrestlers, the torch was trampled out, and then in the darkness there was the sound of a heavy fall, and, panting with exertion, Tom exclaimed—

"I'm sitting on his head, Mas'r Harry, and he can't bite now. Just you tie his legs together with your hankercher."

I had thrown the gun aside, and, in spite of a few frantic plunges, succeeded in firmly binding the ankles of the prostrate man together.

"Now, Mas'r Harry," whispered Tom, "take hold of one arm—hold it tight—and we'll turn him over on his face, and tie his hands behind his back. Hold tight, for he's a slippery chap, and he'll make another struggle for it. He got the coat off his face once, but I had him again directly. Now, then, over with him! Here, ask your uncle to hold his legs down."

There was a heave, a struggle, and then a half-suffocated voice exclaimed—

"Tom! Harry! are you both mad?"

"Oh, Tom!" I ejaculated, "what have you done?"

"Ketched the wrong bird, Mas'r Harry, and no mistake," muttered Tom, as he hastily set my uncle at liberty. "It was that darkness as done it. He slipped away like an eel just as the light went out."

"Never mind," gasped my uncle. "But what muscles you boys have!"

"He did not go towards the entrance," I whispered, excitedly, "and I have his gun. If we are careful, we shall have him yet."

Then I could not help shuddering, as I rejoiced over the merciful policy we had determined upon; for I thought how easily we might have caused the death of one of our own party.

"It was an unlucky mistake, lads," whispered my uncle, "but we must have him, living or dead."

The rest of the way to where we had left the companions of our trial was so narrow, that by pressing cautiously forward, I knew that we must encounter Garcia sooner or later.

As we reached the part where the track ran along a ledge, we divided, Tom continuing to walk along the ledge to where it terminated in the rocky tongue over the great gulf, while my uncle and I, trembling

for those we loved, continued our search by the side of the little stream till where the passage widened into the vault where the mules were concealed, when I stopped short, my uncle going forward to search the vault, while I stayed to cut off the enemy's retreat, or to spring up the ledge to the help of Tom.

I heard my uncle's whisper, and one or two timid replies, and then came an interval of anxious silence before my uncle crept back to me.

"I have been all over the place, as near as I can tell, Harry," he whispered. "Can he have passed us?"

"Impossible!" I said. "Uncle, we must have a light."

Without a word, my uncle glided away; then I heard a rustle as of paper; there was the faint glow of a match dipped in a phosphorus bottle, the illumination of a large, loose piece of paper, and then a torch was lit, showing us Garcia standing upon the extreme verge of the rocky point over the gulf; and at the same moment he drew the trigger of a pistol, to produce only a flash of the pan, which revealed to him his perilous position.

"Senor Garcia!" I cried, loudly, as I climbed up to join Tom on the ledge which Garcia must pass, "you are standing with a great gulf behind and on either side. A step is certain death. You are our prisoner!"

With a howl, like that of a wild beast, he raised his other pistol and fired—the report echoing fearfully from the great abyss. Then, darting forward, he leaped upon Tom, overturned him, and the next moment he was upon me, and we were in a deadly embrace, rolling down the side of the ledge, over and over in our fierce struggle, till we reached the little stream, whose waters were soon foaming around us.

Garcia was active as one of the jaguars of the forest hard by; but I was young, and my muscles were pretty tough. And, besides, a faint shriek that I had heard as Garcia dashed at me had given me nerve for the struggle.

It is hard to say, though, who would have gained the upper hand, for my principal efforts were directed at preventing him from drawing his knife, whilst I had his arms fast to his side, he all the while striving to free himself.

I began to be hopeful, though, at last, when, by a feint, he got me beneath him, and the next moment he had forced my head beneath the icy waters of the little stream. Very few minutes would have sufficed, for I could feel myself growing weaker; but there was help at hand. We were dragged out, and by the time I had somewhat recovered myself sufficiently to wring the water from my eyes, and, with my temples throbbing, to gaze about, there was Garcia pinned to the ground by Tom, whose foot was upon the villain's throat, and his gun-barrel pointed at his head.

"Now then, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, "we've got the right one this time, anyhow. Here, come and stick your torch in here, Mas'r Landell, and we'll soon make it right."

My uncle did as he was requested; and then, once more, Garcia made a savage fight for his liberty.

But it was in vain; and while I helped to hold him down, Tom tightly bound his legs, my uncle performing the same operation with the prisoner's hands.

"That aint no good, Mas'r Landell," said Tom.



"He'll wriggle them loose in no time. Look here, I'll show you. Turn him over."

There was no heed paid to the savage glare, nor the muttered Spanish oaths, of our prisoner, as he was forced over on his face, when, producing some string, Tom placed Garcia's hands back to back, and then tightly tied his thumbs and his little fingers together with the stout twine. A handkerchief was next bound round the wrists, and Tom rose.

"He won't get over that, Mas'r Landell. He'll lie there as long as we like—only, if he don't hold his tongue, we'll stick something in his mouth; and he may thank his stars that he has got off so well. And now, Mas'r Harry, I propose that we all go back and see what the Indians are doing; and if they are not gone, why, we'll all fire our guns off one after the other, as 'll kick up such a hooroar as 'll scare 'em into fits."

Tom's advice found favour; but it was not until I had thoroughly satisfied myself of the security of my enemy's bonds, that I had the heart to leave.

Then, and then only, we crept cautiously back, till, after a long and painful walk, we perceived the faint glow from the burning torches in the vault of the entrance to the bird-chamber, and on making our way once more, as near as we dared go, we could see that the Indians were clustered together, and anxiously watching the passage.

Stepping back, then, thirty or forty paces, we fired off six barrels in quick succession, with an effect that startled even ourselves, and, had the thundering roar been followed by the falling in of block after block of stone, I, for one, should not have been surprised. It seemed as though the noise would never cease; but when, with the last reverberation dying away, we crept forward, it was only to find that there was darkness everywhere, for the Indians, to the last man, had fled.

CHAPTER XLII.—TAKING FLIGHT.

IT was with a feeling of thankfulness that can be well understood that we returned once more to the small cavern, to seek the rest and refreshment of which we were all so much in need.

The words of encouragement we were able to utter respecting our present safety were most thoroughly needed, while the lights we now ventured to burn took off something of the sense of oppression caused by the darkness.

Our arrangements were soon made for one to be always on guard, and trusting to the dread of the Indians for our safety in other directions, we gladly partook of the welcome rest.

At the end of some hours we were seated together to consult upon our future operations, and had soon arrived at the decision that the sooner we set off the better, and the next night was fixed upon for our departure.

"You see, Harry," said my uncle, "that the difficulty is in journeying through the forest; if once we can strike a stream, the rest is easy."

"Or would be if we had boats, uncle, or—"

I stopped short, for I had recalled the skin raft once more, and the possibility of increasing its size. As my uncle had said, if once we could hit upon a stream, the rest would be easy, floating ever downward, from stream to river, and from river to one of the great waterways.

Then came the subject of the treasure.

"But are you sure that you have it safe still?" said my uncle, anxiously.

"As safe, uncle, as I soon hope to have our other treasures," I said, cheerfully.

A visit to the mouth of the cave showed that all was still, and the valley to all appearance deserted.



But our walk was not unprofitable, for we were able to collect a good bundle of pine-wood for torches, left behind by the Indians—brightly-burning, resinous wood, which cast a powerful light when in use.

We found Tom watching his prisoner on our re-

turn, and my aunt and Lilla ready to welcome us gladly. But not a sigh was uttered—not a question as to when they might expect to escape; they were patience exemplified.

As for the prisoner, Tom said that he was as sulky



as a bear with a sore head. It was a great tie upon us, but upon retaining him in safety rested our success; for it seemed evident that the Indians believed that their share in the matter was at an end, and had gone away, strengthened in their belief that it was death to him who penetrated the mysterious portion of the cave, sacred to the thunder god, for Garcia had not returned.

My uncle relieved Tom—not to rest, but to aid me in seeking to recover the treasure; but, upon a second consideration, it was determined not to proceed further until the next morning.

Watching and sleeping in turns, the next morning arrived, and we once more journeyed to the mouth of the cave.

All in the vale was silent as the grave; not a leaf rustling.

On returning, the mules were well fed, only leaving one more portion. We breakfasted, and the prisoner, compelled at last by hunger, condescended to partake of some food; when we afterwards moved to a narrow part, where our proceedings were to him invisible.

A rather anxious question now arose: What were we to do with him?

We could not leave him bound to die of starvation in the darkness of the cavern; humanity forbade the thought for an instant. We could not take him with us, neither could we take his life in cold blood, even though our safety depended upon it.

"We must take him a part of the way, and then leave him in some track, where there is a possibility of his being found," said my uncle. "He ought to die, Harry; but we cannot turn murderers."

It was evident that our prisoner did not expect much mercy, for we could see that his face was absolutely livid when, pistol in hand, either of us

approached to examine his bonds; and once, in his abject dread, he shrieked aloud to Lilla to come and save him from me.

My uncle's seemed the only plan that we could adopt; and leaving him in charge, Tom and I fixed our light at the head of the raft, and, to the horror of Lilla and Mrs. Landell, set off upon our subterranean voyage—one which produced no tremor now in us, for familiarity had bred contempt.

The passage was safely traversed till we came to the hiding-place of the treasure, when, after a few attempts to fish up the packages, we found that there was no resource but for one of us to plunge boldly into the icy water.

Tom would have gone, but I felt that it was my turn; and after divesting myself of a portion of my clothing, I lowered myself over the side of the raft, waded a little, and then, after a few tries, succeeded in bringing up, one at a time, the whole of the treasure. Then, with a little contriving, I once more obtained a place upon the heavily weighted raft, and we floated back in triumph to where, torch in hand, stood Lilla, gazing anxiously along the dark tunnel, and ready to give a joyous cry as she saw our safe return.

I sent Tom to relieve my uncle, who hurried excitedly to my side, and helped me to unload.

"Harry, my boy," he exclaimed, huskily, as we lifted the packages on to the rocks, "I can hardly believe it. Is it true?"

I smiled in his face; and then with more rope we bound the packages securely, before leaving them to drain off the superabundant moisture.

Rest and refreshment, and then two of the mules were laden with the gold; our reduced stock of provision was divided between those my aunt and Lilla were to ride; and towards evening, according to arrangement, Tom led the way with one of the



gold mules; my uncle followed, leading another, and bearing a light, and the others required no inducement to keep close behind.

Garcia must have imagined that he was to be left to starve—for he did not see me, as I stood back

listening to the pattering of the mules' feet upon the hard rock, and the silence that fell directly after when they touched sand—and, raising his voice, he gave so wild and despairing a shriek that my uncle came hurrying back.

"Harry, my dear lad," he exclaimed, "surely you have not—"

"No, uncle," I said, contemptuously, "I had not even spoken. It was his coward heart that smote him."

Loosening his legs, which of late we had slackened, so as to guard against numbness, we made him rise; and then, forcing my arm under his, I led him along till we overtook the last mule, bearing my aunt; and then our slow, dark journey was continued till, nearing the entrance, the lights were extinguished, and my uncle, taking Tom's place as leader, the latter stole forward, and returned in half an hour to say that the sun had set, and that though he had watched long and carefully from the very mouth of the cave, there was nothing to be seen.

We went forward then, to rest for fully an hour in the cavern, close now to the barrier—for the darkness fell swiftly into the ravine, rolling, as it were, down the mountain sides—and then, with beating hearts, we prepared to start; our course being along the little valley to the entrance, and then, according to my uncle's plans, as nearly south-east as we could travel until we could hit upon a stream.

And talking of a stream reminds me that I did not mention how we had taken the raft to pieces, to secure the empty skins on the mules Lilla and my aunt were riding.

"Why not have 'em out o' the way atop o' the gold bags, Mas'r Harry?" said Tom.

"Because, Tom, it may be necessary to leave the gold behind," I said; "and we shall want the raft for our escape."

Tom did not say anything, but he set his teeth hard, and the skins were secured where I wished.

The time for starting at length came, and, after a little further consultation, Garcia was once more carefully secured, and laid upon his back in the mouth of the cave, that being the only plan we could adopt; and then, panting with excitement, each man with all his weapons ready for immediate action, we softly climbed the barrier, and in single file began to move down the ravine.

The darkness was intense, and but for the sagacity of the leading mule our progress would have been slow indeed; but the patient brute went on at a quiet, regular pace, and his fellows followed, the breathing of the animals, and the slight rustle through the herbage, being all that smote the ear.

I should think that we had gone about a quarter of a mile, straining our eyes to catch sight of an enemy on either side, as we made our way through what was like a dense bank of darkness, when, loud and clear upon the night air, rang out a wild, strange cry, which made us instinctively stop to listen.

Twice more it rang out, evidently distant, but still plainly heard as it echoed along the ravine.

"It is some beast of prey, but it will not come near us," said my uncle, to encourage Mrs. Landell.

"Harry, what is it?" whispered Lilla.

And her soft arm was passed round my neck as

she clung, trembling, to me, unable to master her agitation.

"We must push on," I said.

And once more the mules were in motion, when the cry rang out again, louder and clearer this time.

I did not answer Lilla's question, for I thought it better not; but I had my own thoughts upon the subject, and I was wondering whether my uncle suspected the meaning of the cry, when I was startled by a voice which seemed to rise out of the darkness.

"Mas'r Harry—Mas'r Harry! I shall never forgive myself. Only to think of me being the one as tied the last knot, and then never to think of gagging him. He'll be there shouting till he brings down all the Indians within twenty miles. Pray let's make haste, for I shan't breathe till we get out of this great, long furrer, Mas'r Harry."

The darkness still so thick that we could hardly see the bushes against which we brushed, while even when passing beneath dense masses of foliage there seemed to be no difference. A hundred enemies might have been right in front of us, and we should have walked right in their midst.

It was a daring adventure; but it was only by keeping on that we could hope to escape, and if the black darkness did not prove our friend until we were clear of the ravine, I felt that we could hardly hope to get away.

The cries still continued at intervals; but now every cry only seemed to nerve us to greater exertion, and at last they sounded but faintly, as, under the impression that we were now past the entrance to the ravine, I was about to tell Tom to try and bear off to the right, if the undergrowth would allow. We had all drawn up, and the mules were reaching down their heads, tempted by the dewy grass, when Tom gave a warning whisper; and directly after, just to our left, came the sound of bodies moving through the bushes, coming nearer and nearer, till about abreast, when they turned off again, and seemed to be proceeding up the ravine towards the cavern.

It was a painful five minutes as we stood there, trembling lest one of the mules should shake buckle or strap; for no one there, on afterwards comparing notes, had a doubt as to the cause of the sounds. It was evidently a body of some half-dozen men making their way as fast as darkness would allow, and it was not until all was once more quiet that we could again breathe freely, and continue our journey as swiftly as we could pass through the trees.

We had no difficulty in journeying to the right, and it soon became evident that we were out of the ravine; but I had very little hope of our being able to continue in a straight line, seeking the direction where we expected to find a river.

Our progress was necessarily slow, but every half mile, we all felt, was that distance nearer to safety. I was hopeful, too, about our trail; the dew fell heavily, and that and the elastic nature of the growth through which we passed would, I thought, possibly conceal our track from those who might try to follow it.

And so we journeyed on through that thick darkness, till the first grey dawn of day found us still

hurrying through the dripping foliage, heavy everywhere with the moisture deposited during the night.

CHAPTER XLIII.—ON THE RIVER'S BRINK.

"NOW we can see what we're about, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, cheerfully. "Look, there's the first peep of where the sun's coming, and if we'd been boxing the compass all night, we couldn't have been trundling more south-easter than we are. Hooroar, Miss Lilla, keep up your sperrits, and we shall soon be all right."

Lilla smiled a response, and, cheered by the bright day, we made good progress during the next two hours before the mules began to flag, when, letting them graze, we made a short and hasty meal ourselves, each eye scanning the forest round for enemies, such as we knew might spring up at any moment.

An hour's rest taken of necessity, and then we were once more journeying on, hopeful that at any moment we might strike upon one of the tributaries of the great streams fed by the eternal snow of the mountains; but hours went by, and no sign of water appeared, till suddenly, Tom, who was in advance, said, softly—

"Here's water somewhere, not far off, Mas'r Landell, for my mule's cocking his nose up, and sniffing at a fine rate."

There was no doubt of it being the case, for no sooner had Tom's beast given evidence of its power of scent, than similar manifestations followed from the others; and now, instead of flagging and labouring along, the hot and wearied beasts broke into a trot, and had to be restrained as they tugged at the bridles.

The character of the undergrowth now, too, began to indicate moisture, and that floods sometimes swept along the low, flat jungle, where we with some difficulty forced our way; and at last, almost overcome by the heat and excitement, we came suddenly upon one of the broad, sluggish streams that intersect the vast forest lands, and go to form the vast water system of the Orinoco—a stream that, in spite of its sombre current, and the desolation of its muddy banks, whispered to us hope and escape from the pursuit that might be now even pressing upon our heels.

My uncle and I pressed forward to scan the bank, ready to fire at any noxious reptile that might show fight. But we were not called upon to fire; for though a couple of large crocodiles scuttled off into the water, and twice over there was a sharp rustling amongst the reeds, we were unmolested; and now, bringing forward our weaker companions, we made a temporary halt.

Now it is quite possible that, had I been a naturalist, I might have called the horrible reptiles that abounded in these muddy streams by some other name than crocodile; but even now, after consulting various authorities, I am not quite satisfied as to the proper title. The English of the district always called them crocodiles, and to me they certainly seemed to differ from the alligator or cayman, whose acquaintance I afterwards made amongst the lagoons of the Southern United States.

But to return to our position on the river bank.

We knew that there was no time to be lost; and having cut a few stout bamboos, we inflated the four skins we had, but not without some difficulty, soaking, and the tying up of one or two failing places.

Our little raft was at length made, and provided with a couple of poles, thus affording easy means of escape for three—at a pinch for four.

And now came the arrangement for the gold.

It seemed cruel, but, situated as we were, what else could we do? I did not like the plan, but could see no alternative; so with Tom's aid the mules were unloaded, and we led the poor brutes into the leafy screen, so that our weaker companions might not be witnesses of how they were to be offered up for our safety.

For our plan was this—to slay the poor beasts, and with their skins to make a raft that should bear Tom, myself, and the gold.

My heart failed me as the faithful brutes, that had brought us thus far, turned their great, soft eyes up to mine, and for a few minutes I hesitated, trying to think out some other plan for our escape, when a warning cry from my uncle brought Tom and myself back to the river bank, where we could see, half a mile higher up the stream, a couple of canoes, each containing two Indians, who were lazily paddling down towards where we were.

At first we took them for enemies, and gave ourselves up for lost; and I was about to beg of my uncle to risk flight with Lilla and my aunt upon the little raft, whilst I and Tom covered their escape with our guns; but the distance being lessened each moment, we could make out that these men belonged to one of the inoffensive fishing tribes who lived upon the rivers and their banks; and a new thought struck me—one which I directly communicated to my uncle.

"Keep strict guard," I then said, "and mind this—a loud whistle shall bring us directly back to your help. Come, Tom—bring your gun, man!"

The next minute Tom and I were upon the raft, dragging ourselves slowly upstream by means of the bushes that overhung the river, till we could perceive that the Indians could see our coming, when we began to paddle the best way we could out towards the middle.

As I expected, the Indians first stopped, and then made as if to turn round and flee, raising their paddles for a fierce dash, when—

"Now, Tom!" I exclaimed; and, standing up together, we presented our guns as if about to fire.

"Ah, they're like the crows at home," muttered Tom; "they know what a gun is."

Tom was right; for the poor fellows uttered a wail of misery, held up their paddles, and then suffered their canoes to drift helplessly towards us.

"Quick, Tom!" I now exclaimed; "lay down your gun, and try and fight against this stream, or we shall lose them after all."

Tom seized the bamboo pole, and by rapid beating of the water contrived to keep the raft stationary till the Indians were nearly abreast, when, pointing to the bank from which we had come, and still menacing them with my gun, I made the poor,

timid creatures slowly precede us, and tow us as well to where my uncle was anxiously watching.

Upon landing, the poor fellows crouched before us, and laid their foreheads upon the muddy grass; when, after trying to reassure them, my uncle, who knew a little of their barbarous tongue, explained that we only wanted their canoes; when, overjoyed at so escaping with their lives, the poor abject creatures eagerly forced the paddles into our hands.

"Tell them, uncle, that we don't want their fishing-gear," I said; when there was a fresh demonstration of joy, and Tom threw out their rough lines and nets on to the grass.

"They may as well help us load, Mas'r Harry, mayn't they?" said Tom—a proposition I at once agreed to.

And in a very short space of time the gold was all in one canoe, which we tethered by a short rope to the other, which contained the provisions and ammunition, and in this Tom and I were to go; while upon the more commodious raft my uncle was to sit, armed and watching, with Lilla and my aunt.

It was nearly dark when our arrangements were at an end; and thankful that, so far, we had been uninterrupted, I drew the raft close in, secured it to our canoe, and Tom took his place, paddle in hand. My uncle made a couple of good grassy seats for Lilla and my aunt, and took his place beside them; and now nothing was wanted but for me to take a paddle beside Tom, when he exclaimed—

"This here stuff makes the canoe all hang to the stern, Mas'r Harry. Tell you what, I'll go in that canoe for the present, and get the freight shifted, and then join you again."

I nodded acquiescence, and then turned to the poor, miserable creatures that we seemed to be robbing, and who now stood, dejected of aspect, watching us.

"What shall I give them?" I thought. "A gun—a knife or two. Pish! how absurd! Here—here!" I exclaimed, catching the two nearest savages by the hand, and hastily drawing them into the brake, when the others followed. "One apiece for you, my good fellows, and you gain by the exchange."

They could not understand my words; but as I pointed to the animals tethered in the gloom, and then placed the bridle of a mule in each of the four men's hands, their joy seemed unbounded, and, with a nod and a smile, I was turning to depart, eager to continue our flight, when a wild cry from the raft seemed to fix me to the spot.

CHAPTER XLIV.—IN THE DARK.

THE cry was repeated twice before I could make a dash through the thick, swampy growth towards the bank.

"Quick—quick, Harry! They are here!"

"Mas'r Harry!" cried Tom, in a piteous voice.

The next moment I was on the trampled bank, a little below where we had landed, to see in a moment that the little flat was being pushed off; for, in cat-like silence, our enemies had approached us, and I bitterly repented that I had not joined Tom, instead of wasting time over the fishers, whose canoes we had taken. I knew that not a moment had been wasted, and that it would have been im-

possible to have half-made another raft by this time; but the means of safety had been open to me, and I had slighted it; while now I was in despair.

Those were terrible moments! As I emerged from the brake there arose a fierce yell; there was a scattered volley, and the flashes gave me a momentary glimpse of the pale face of Lilla upon the raft. Then there was the loud splashing of the water, and the hurrying to and fro of dimly seen figures—for the darkness was now deepening with that rapidity only known in equatorial regions.

A moment after, I heard the splashing of water, as of some one swimming; and feeling that it was my only chance, I prepared to dash into the muddy current, when there was the sound of a hoarse cry, and a heavy body struck me on the back, driving me down upon my hands and knees, a tight clutch was upon my throat, and I felt that I was a prisoner, when, with a despairing effort for liberty, I threw myself sidewise towards the river, rolled over in the mud, and then my adversary and I were beneath the water.

We rose directly, and I felt that I was free; for, with a guttural cry, my foe loosened his hold and made for the bank, while, blinded and confused, I swam desperately in the direction I hoped to have been taken by the raft.

I almost dashed through the water for a few minutes, as I tried to put in force every feint I knew in swimming; while, as I made the current foam around, I could hear the noise of struggling, muttered imprecations, and then a low, panting breathing, and then once more there was silence.

I began to feel that I had made my last effort; and with that fair, bright face shining before my despairing mental gaze, I was nerving myself for another stroke, when my hand touched something hard.

"Loose your hold or I fire!" cried a fierce voice.

And the barrel of a gun was pressed against my cheek.

"Uncle!" I gasped, in a voice that did not sound like mine, and as I spoke I grasped the cold barrel of the gun.

There was a loud ejaculation, a faint cry, hands were holding mine, I could feel the raft rocking to and fro, as if about to be overturned; and then, as I felt that I was drawn upon it—that I was saved—my senses reeled, and my mind became dark as the sky which hung above the river.

I believe my swoon did not last many minutes. How could it, when my head was being held to a throbbing breast which heaved with emotion, and hot tears were falling upon my forehead?

"Lilla!" I whispered.

"Harry!" was breathed upon my cheek.

But this was no time for dalliance, and rallying my strength, I rose to my knees.

"I thought I should never have reached you, uncle," I said.

"I did my best, Harry," he whispered; "but I felt that when those bloodhounds leaped suddenly out from the brake that I must push off."

"But what was that struggle I heard? Did I not hear Garcia's voice?"

"Yes," said my uncle, huskily.

"And where is Tom?"

My uncle was silent for a few moments.

"Poor Tom?" I groaned, in an inquiring voice.

"Yes," said my uncle, huskily. "It seemed to me that Garcia and another reached the canoe Tom was in—the gold canoe, Harry—and that then there was a desperate fight, which lasted some minutes. I then seized the paddle, Harry, and tried to make for where the struggle seemed to be going on; but now there was a faint, gurgling cry, and then utter silence; and though I softly paddled here and there, I could find nothing. Harry, that canoe was heavily laden—the gold was a dead weight—"

"And it took down with it what was worth ten thousand times more than the vile yellow trash," I cried, bitterly—"as true a heart as ever beat. Oh, uncle—uncle! I have murdered as noble a man as ever breathed, and as faithful a friend. Oh, Tom—Tom!" I groaned.

I could say no more; but out there that night, on the breast of the black, swift stream, with not a sound now but the sobs of the women to break the terrible silence, I—a woman myself now in heart—bent down to cover my face with my hands and cry like a child.

I did not notice that the stream had lifted us from the mud bank, nor that we were being borne rapidly along, but for hour after hour I sat there, bowed down and sorrowing.

CHAPTER XLV.—DOWN THE RIVER.

MORNING at last, to bring no brightness to my heart.

We paddled swiftly down the stream, the little raft, buoyant as possible, following swiftly in our wake.

"Harry," said my uncle, almost sternly, "I have thought it over during the darkness of the night, and I cannot feel that we have been wanting in any way. Poor lad! it was his fate."

"Uncle," I cried, "I can bear this no longer. I must go back!"

"Harry," cried my uncle, "you shall not act in that mad fashion. You have escaped with life, and now you would throw it away."

"Is it not mine to cast away if I like?" I said, bitterly.

"No," he said, in a low tone, as he bent forward, so that his lips nearly touched my ear. "Look there, Harry, and recollect this: When a man has won the love of a true-hearted, ardent girl, his life belongs to another as well. In her name, I bid you stay."

"Say no more, uncle—pray say no more," I groaned. "Indeed, I believe that I am half mad. I would almost sooner have died myself than that this should have happened. How can I ever face those at home?"

"Harry, my lad," said my uncle, "take up your paddle, and use it. You are thinking of the future—duty says that you must think now of the present. We have two lives to save; and, until we have them in one of the settled towns, our work is not done."

I took up my paddle in silence, and plunged the blade in the stream, and we went on, swiftly and silently, along reach after reach of the river.

Many hours passed without an alarm, and then, just as we were passing into another and a wider river, there came from the jungly edge of the left bank a puff of smoke, and a bullet struck the canoe.

"To the right," whispered my uncle.

And the paddles being swiftly plied, we made for the opposite bank, striving hard to place those we had with us out of reach of harm. But with bullets flying after us our efforts seemed very slow, and the raft was struck twice, and the water splashed over us several times, before I felt a sharp blow on my shoulder—one which half numbed me—while a bullet fell down into the bottom of the canoe.

"Spent shot, Harry," said my uncle, striking on alternate sides with his paddle, for I was helpless for the next quarter of an hour.

The skin raft held together well—light and buoyant—so that our progress down stream was swift, but apparently endless, day after day, till our provisions were quite exhausted, and our guns had to be called into requisition to supply us with food.

Very little was said, and only once did my uncle talk to me quietly about our future, saying that we must get to one of the settlements on the Orinoco, low down near its mouth, and then see what could be done.

A deep, settled melancholy seemed to have affected us all; but the sight, after many days, of a small trading-boat seemed to inspire us with hopefulness; and having, in exchange for a gun, obtained a fair quantity of provisions, we continued our journey with refreshed spirits.

In spite, though, of seeing now and then a trading boat, we got at last into a very dull and dreamy state, while, as is usually the case, the weakest, and the one from whom you might expect the least, proved to have the stoutest heart. I allude, of course, to Lilla—Heaven bless her!

But there was a change coming—one which we little expected—just as, after what seemed to be an endless journey, we came in sight of a town, which afterwards proved to be Angostura.

CHAPTER XLVI.—RECOVERED.

IT was the afternoon of a glorious day, and we were floating along in the broiling heat, now and then giving a dip with the paddles, so as to direct the canoe more towards the bank, where we could see houses. There was a boat here and a boat there, moored in the current; and now and then we passed a canoe, while others seemed to be going in the same direction as ourselves.

"Harry, look there!" said my uncle.

I looked in the direction my uncle pointed out, shading my eyes with my hand, when I dropped my paddle, as I rose up, trembling, in the boat; for just at that moment, from a canoe being paddled towards us, there came a faint but unmistakable English cheer—one to which I could not respond for the choking feelings in my throat.

I rubbed my eyes, fancying that I must have been deceived, as the canoe came nearer and nearer, but still slowly, till it grated against ours, and my hands were held fast by those of honest old Tom, who was laughing, crying, and talking all in a breath.

"And I've been thinking I was left behind, Mas'r

Harry, and working away to catch you; while all the while I've been paddling away from you."

"Tom!—Tom!" I cried, huskily, "we thought you dead!"

"But I aint—not a bit of it, Mas'r Harry. I'm as live as ever. But aint you going to ask arter anything else?"

"Tom, you're alive," I said, in the thankfulness of my heart, "and that is enough."

"No, 'taint, Mas'r Harry," he whispered, rather faintly; for now I saw that he looked pale and exhausted. "No, 'taint enough; for I've got all the stuff in the bottom here, just as we packed it in. Aint you going to say 'hooray!' for that, Mas'r Harry?" he cried, in rather disappointed tones.

"Tom," I said, "life's worth a deal more than gold." And then I turned from him, for I could say no more.

We pushed in now to the landing-place, with a feeling of awakened confidence, given—though I did not think of it then—by the knowledge of our wealth; and leaving Tom in charge of the canoes, we sought the first shelter we could obtain, and leaving there my uncle to watch over the safety of the women, I set about making inquiries, and was exceedingly fortunate in obtaining possession of a house that was falling to ruin, having been lying deserted since quitted by an English merchant a couple of years before. A few inquiries, too, led us to the discovery that there was an English vice-consul resident, to whom I told so much of our story as was safe, mentioning the attack upon my uncle, and speaking of myself as having merely been upon an exploring visit.

The result was a number of pleasant little attentions, the consul sending up his servants to assist in making the house habitable, and insisting upon lending us such articles of furniture as would be necessary for our immediate wants.

I took the first opportunity of impressing upon all present secrecy respecting the treasure, for I could not tell in what light our possession of it might be looked upon; and then I hurried down to the canoes to Tom with refreshments, of which he eagerly partook, as he said, at intervals—

"I believe I should have been starved out, Mas'r Harry, if there hadn't been some of the eatables stuffed in my canoe by mistake; for I'd got nothing much to swop with the Indians when I did happen to see any ashore."

It was then arranged that he should still stay with the boats, till I could return and tell him that I had a safe place, while as Tom lazily stretched himself over the packages in the canoe, sheltering his head with a few great leaves, his appearance excited no attention, and I left him without much anxiety, to return to my uncle.

The discovery that Tom existed had robbed our perils of three parts of their suffering; and now, with feelings of real anxiety respecting the treasure springing up, I hurried back again to the landing-place, to find all well, for the place was too Spanish and lazy for our coming to create much excitement.

"Say, Mas'r Harry," cried Tom, grinning hugely, in spite of his pale face and exhaustion, "I've got

you now. I said you was to let me have a pound a week; I must go in for thirty bob after this. Come now, no shirking. Say yes, or I'm blown if I don't scuttle the canoe."

It was evident, though, that Tom had undergone a great deal, and was far from able to bear much more; for that evening, after telling the Indian porters that I was a sort of curiosity and stone collector, and getting the treasure carried up safely to the house which I had taken, he suddenly gave a lurch, and would have fallen, had I not caught his arm.

"Why, Tom!" I cried, anxiously.

"I think, Mas'r Harry," he said softly, "it might be as well if you was to let a doctor look at me—it would be just as well. I've a bullet in me somewhere, and that knife—"

"Bullet—knife, Tom?"

"Yes, Mas'r Harry, that Garcia— But I'll tell you all about it after."

The doctor I hastily summoned looked serious as he examined Tom's hurts; and though, with insular pride, I rather looked down upon Spanish doctors, this gentleman soon proved himself of no mean skill in surgery, and under his care Tom rapidly approached convalescence.

"You see, Mas'r Harry, it was after this fashion," said Tom, one evening, as I sat by his bedside indulging in a cigar, just when one of the afternoon rains had cooled the earth, and the air that was wafted through the open window was delicious. "You see it was after this fashion—"

"But are you strong enough to talk about it, Tom?" I said, anxiously.

"Strong, Mas'r Harry! I could get a taller cask down out of a van. Well, it was like this: I was, as you know, in the gold canoe; and being on my knees, I was leaning over the side, expecting you to swim off to me, and at last, as I thought, there you were, when I held out my hands and got hold of one of yours and the barrel of a gun with the other, when a thought struck me—"

"Why, surely Mas'r Harry hadn't his gun with him?"

"But it was no time, I thought, for bothering about trifles, with the night black as ink, and the Indians collected together upon the bank; so I did the best I could to help you, and the next minute there you were in the gold canoe, and not without nearly oversetting it, heavy laden as she was—when I whispers 'You'd best take a paddle here, Mas'r Harry,' when I felt two hands at my throat, my head bent back, a knee forced into my chest, and there in that black darkness I lay for a few minutes quite helpless, calling myself all the fools I could think of for helping some one on board that I knew now was not you."

CHAPTER XLVII.—HOW TOM SAVED THE TREASURE.

"THAT was rather ticklish work, being choked as I was, Mas'r Harry," said Tom, with his pale face flushing up, and his eyes brightening with the recollection; "but, above all things, I couldn't help feeling then that, if I did get a prick with a knife, I deserved it for being such a donkey. Then I got thinking about Sally Smith, and wishing that

we had parted better friends; then about you and Miss Lilla, and about how all the gold would be lost; and then I turned savage, and seemed to see blood, as I made up my mind that, if you didn't have the treasure, the Don shouldn't, for I'd upset the canoe, and sink it all first for the crockydiles.

"I don't know what I said, and I don't much recollect what I did, only that for ever so long there was a fierce struggle going on, which made that little canoe rock so, that I expected every moment it would be upset; but I expect we both meant that it shouldn't; and at last we were lying quite still on the gold, with all round us black and quiet as my lord's vault in the old churchyard at home. Garcia had got tight hold of my hands, and I kept him by that means, so that he couldn't use his sting—I mean his knife—you know, Mas'r Harry.

"It seemed to me at last that my best plan was to lie still and wait till he gave me a chance; for after one or two struggles I only found that I was nowhere, and ever so much weaker; so I did lie still, waiting for a chance, and wondering that Mas'r Landell didn't come and lend me a hand.

"All at once there came a horrible thought to me, and that was—ah! there were two horrible thoughts—that you had missed the canoe and had gone down, and that the raft had broke away from the gold canoe while we were jerking and rocking about, and that I was left alone here on this big river, with the Don waiting for a chance to send that knife of his through me.

"Now, you needn't go thinking it was because I cared anything about you, Mas'r Harry," continued Tom, in a sulky voice, "because it wasn't that: it was only because I was a weak, great booby, and got a wondering what your poor mother would say when I got home, and then, I couldn't help it, if I didn't get crying away like a great girl kep' in at school, for I don't know how long, and the canoe gliding away all the time on the river.

"Getting rid of all that hot water made me less soft; and when Mas'r Garcia got struggling again, I give him two or three such wipes on the head as must have wound him up a bit; and then, after nearly having the boat over again, there we lay for hour after hour in the thick darkness, getting stiff as stiff, as we kep' one another from doing mischief. And then at last came the light, with the fog hanging over the river, thick as the old washus at home when Sally Smith took off the copper lid and got stirring up the clothes. Then the sun came cutting through the mist, chopping it up like golden wires through a make of soap. There was the green stuff like a hedge on both sides of the river, the parrots a-screaming, the crockydiles crawling on to the mud-banks or floating down, the birds a-fishing, and all looking as bright as could be, while my heart was black as a copper-hole, Mas'r Harry, and that dark-looking Don was close aside me.

"I aint of a murderous disposition, Mas'r Harry, but I felt very nasty then, in that bright, clear morning, though all the time I was thinking what a nice place this world would be if it wasn't for wild beasts and men as makes themselves worse than wild beasts, for there was that Don's eye saying, as plain as could be—

"There aint room enough in this here canoe for both of us, young man!"

"Then it's you as must go out of it, Don Spaniard," says my eyes.

"No, it's you as must go out of it, you beggarly little soap-boiling Englishman," says his eyes.

"It's my Mas'r Harry's gold, and if he's gone to the crockydiles I'll save the treasure for his Miss Lilla and the old folks—so now, then!" says my eyes.

"And all this, you know, was without a word being spoken; when all at once if he didn't make a sort of a jump, and before I knew where we were, he was at one end of the canoe and I was at the other.

"Well, you may say that was a good thing. But it wasn't; for as I scrambled up, there he was with both guns at his end, and me with nothing but a knife.

"I saw through his dodge now, but it was too late; and in the next few moments I thought three things—

"Shall I sit still like a man, and let him shoot me?"

"Shall I rock the canoe over, and let it sink?"

"Shall I go at him?"

"I hadn't pluck enough to sit still and be shot, Mas'r Harry, for you know what a cur I always was; and I thought it a pity to sink the canoe, in case you, if you were alive, or Mas'r Landell, might come back to look for it. So I made up my mind to the last, being bristly, and, with my monkey up, I dashed at him.

"Bang! He got a shot at me, and I felt just as if some one had hit me a blow with a stick hard enough to make me savage; but it didn't stop me a bit, for I reached at him such a crack with my double fist, just as he struck his knife into me; and then we were overboard, and struggling together in the sunlit water, with the blood dyeing it all around.

"It's all over with you, Tom!" I said to myself; for, as we rose to the surface after our plunge, he got one arm free, his knife was lifted, and I looked him full in the face, as I felt, though I didn't say it—"You cowardly beggar! why can't you fight like a man, with your fists?"

"The next moment he must have struck that knife into me again, when I never saw such a horrible change in my life as came over his face—from savage joy to fear—for in a flash he let go the knife, shrieked horribly, and half forced himself out of the water, leaving me free, when, with a terrible fear on me that the crockydiles were at him, I swam for the canoe, and how I don't know, but I managed to get in, with hundreds of tiny little fish leaping and darting at me like a shoal of gudgeons, only they nipped pieces out of my hands and feet, which were bare; and if I hadn't been quick, they'd have had me to pieces.

"No sooner was I in the canoe than I turned, for Garcia was shrieking horribly, in a way that nearly drove me mad to hear him, as he beat, and splashed, and tore about in the water—now down, now up, now fighting this way, now that—wild with fear and despair, for those tiny fish were at him by the thousand; his face and hands were streaming with

blood, and I could see that it would be all over with him directly, when, catching up a paddle, I sent the canoe towards him, to pass close by his hand just as he sank.

"To turn and come back was not many moments' work; but he didn't come up where I expected, and I had to paddle back against stream, but again I missed him, and he went down with a yell, Mas'r Harry, that's been buzzing in my ears ever since—wakes me up of a night it does, and sends me in a cold perspiration, as all that scene comes back again.

"I forgot all about his shooting and knifeing me; and, Mas'r Harry, as I hope to get back safe to old England, I did all I could to save him when he came up again—silent this time. Did I say him? No, it wasn't him, but a horrible, ghastly, bleeding mass of flesh and bone, writhing and twisting as the little fish hung to it, and leaped at it by thousands, tearing the quivering body really to pieces before it once more sank under the stream, which was all red with blood.

"I paddled here and I paddled there, frantically, but the body didn't come up again; and then, Mas'r Harry, it seemed to me as if a strong pair of hands had taken hold of the canoe and were twisting it round and round, so that the river and the trees on the banks danced before my eyes, making me that giddy that I fell back and lay I don't know how long.

"When I opened my eyes again, Mas'r Harry, I thought I was dying, for there was a horrible sick feeling on me, one which lasted ever so long, till, remembering all about what had taken place, I felt that I had only been fainting; and raising myself up, I looked on the river for a few minutes, shuddering the while, as I tried to leave off thinking about the horrors in it; but try hard as I would, I couldn't help looking—the place having a sort of fascination for me, as if it was pulling me towards it—and I seemed to see all that going on again, though, perhaps, I'd floated down a good mile since it happened.

"At last I dragged my eyes from the water, and they fell upon the packages, and they made me think of you, Mas'r Harry; and, in the hope that you were a long way on ahead, I took up a paddle—thinking, too, at the same time, that if you were alive, as soon as you had got Miss Lilla safe, you would come back for me."

I did not speak—I could not just then; for in a flood the recollection of the past came upon me, and taking Tom's hands in mine, for a good ten minutes I sat without speaking.

"Well, Mas'r Harry," continued Tom—but speaking now in a thick, husky voice—"I took up the paddle, and then I dropped it again, I was that weak, faint, and in pain; and it seemed to me that before I could do anything else I must wash and bind up a bit.

"One of my hands was very much disabled from my hurt, but I contrived to bind a couple of paddles together; and then, paddling slowly on, I was thinking that my labour had been all in vain, unless I could manage still to save the gold, when, happening to turn round to look upstream, I saw that,

Mas'r Harry, as seemed to give me life, and hope, and strength all in a moment; and you know the rest."

CHAPTER XLVIII.—THE USE TO WHICH IT WAS PUT.

I PASS over the details of melting down the treasure, and packing it in cases. We had no difficulty in securing a passage home, where we arrived in safety.

It may be thought that, with so great a sum of money—so large a fortune—I must have lived in great splendour during the rest of my life. But it was not so. Certainly, I have always since enjoyed the comforts of a pleasant, well-kept, unostentatious home; but the fact is this—it was my fate to marry a woman generous almost to a fault. As you have seen, she began by giving the greatest treasure I found in the New World—herself—to me; and then, upon the strength of our having plenty of money, she was of opinion that its proper purpose was being spent in doing good to others.

My uncle and Mrs. Landell were settled in a pleasant little estate of their own; and after a great deal of persuasion, my father was induced to take upon himself the position of a country gentleman. One way and another our income became shrunk down to very reasonable proportions; though, after Lilla has done all the good that she can in the course of the year, we have always a little to spare.

My story is ended. And now that grey hairs have made their appearance, bringing with them sounder thought and the ripe judgment of experience, I often go over my adventures again, and chat about them with Tom and Sally his wife, when I have taken a run over to their prosperous farm; but, in spite of all the success that has attended me and mine, I think, have thought, and I hope I shall still think to my last day, that my journey to the New World, my adventures, and all I gained, would have been but so much vanity and emptiness had I not won Lilla, who has shed upon my life a sunshine such as has proved that after all *she* was the true GOLD.

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"FOR SHAME!"—(A Black Story.)

A Black Story.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "FAR WEST."

CHAPTER I.—SAILORS ASHORE.



IS dis rum, sah? Yes, sah."
 "You black-looking, curly-headed, grinning, ivoryed son of a coal-pit! You've been watering it!"
 "No, sah; de massa give it me like so, and—"

"Knock him down, Tom."

"Hit him on the head."

"No, no—on the shins; his head's too thick," were the suggestions that arose from a knot of sailors sitting and lying about under a verandah, which surrounded an apparently deserted house.

But the air of desertion was not blank: whitewash glistening in the sun, green-painted jalousies, and the gorgeous foliage of the trees around took off that; while a glance within the open doors showed casks, and presses, and bales that told of busy trade and warehousing. Overhead the sky was blue, of the most brilliant tint, while, but a little subdued, the sea was glistening in a little bay, a couple of hundred feet below, where silvery breakers curled on silvery sand, framed, as it were, in the gorgeous green of the tropic woods.

Primitive, but bright and clearly-cut in the wondrous atmosphere, there were a few houses below, a tiny wharf, and a tiny schooner, whose rigging seemed pencilled in a darker blue against the mararine of the peaceful bay. Up to the right, on the side of the mountain, and seeming to nestle in a grove of exquisite beauty, was a more pretentious house, with its green verandah, its glistening white walls, and clustering creepers, rich in blossom and cloying scent, climbing, clinging, and swinging from post to trellis and back again, in a prodigality of beauty that was all but tiring to the eye. Here there was an opening amidst the feathery palms, displaying richly-cultivated soil, coffee and sugarcane, the one bright in its white blossoms, the other feathery, green, and graceful. Rest where it would, the eye lighted upon the richest bounties of Nature's efforts in vegetation, while from tree to tree flitted gaudy-hued, screaming parroquets, and before each trumpet-shaped blossom of some gaily-tinted convolvulus hung suspended, with wings invisible, those living gems, the humming-birds, ready to flash the next moment here and there their sapphire, ruby, and emerald breasts across the wanderer's path.

The group of sailors, in their white duck-shirts and trousers, had evidently lately climbed the steep pathway from the wharf to the deserted house, now turned into a kind of store or warehouse, since the building of the villa farther up the mountain. They were frank-looking, hearty Englishmen, with a careless disregard of everything but present enjoyment; and the opportunity for having a little boisterous fun out of the sturdy black, who had brought them some drink, was not to be set aside. The result was that, from being hustled about, the poor fellow began to suffer exceedingly rough usage in the shape of blows and kicks; till one coarse-looking man, more brutal than the rest, gave the unfortunate black a kick which sent him down upon his hands and knees.

"Take that, you black-looking cuss, and now be off with you."

And he followed up his kick by ejecting a stream of tobacco juice in the direction of the unoffending rum-bearer.

But almost at the same moment, the sailor, to his intense astonishment, received a tremendous back-handed blow on the ear, which sent him staggering sidewise, and a deep, firm voice said—

"Let that poor beggar alone, can't you?"

The sailor recovered himself with a cry of rage, and turned upon his assailant—a fair, bronzed, muscular young fellow, who, with his hands now resting upon his hips, stood calmly watching his approach.

"I'll pay you for this, my lad," cried the other, fiercely.

And he sprang forward; but only to receive a fair, downright blow between the eyes, which sent him back upon the grass, from which he rose, shaking his head, when, seeing the black squatting down, hugging his knees with both arms, and grinning with delight, he made at him, but only to be stopped by the young fellow who had administered the buffet, who threw out one foot and tripped the other up, so that he once more fell heavily.

"Let the poor beggar alone, I tell you," he said, frowning. "They get enough from the overseers, without you being a brute to them."

The sailor was upon his feet again in an instant, and making at him who had protected the black. Blows were being exchanged furiously the next minute; the other sailors closing round, enjoying the fight as much as did the black, who grinned and chuckled, and roared with laughter every time he saw his late assailant getting the worst of the fray. Directly after, though, the black gave a peculiar cry, as of dismay, and darting amongst the trees, was out of sight in an instant, just as from the grove behind the warehouse appeared, all in white, save the light blue ribbon round her broad straw hat, a fair-haired English-looking girl, whose bright eyes seemed half-dilated with surprise and horror as she approached the group where the two great athletic men were raging, tearing, and struggling together.

"For shame!" she exclaimed, loudly, and with a stamp of her little foot upon the grass. "You, who call yourselves Englishmen, to fight as do the poor degraded slaves here. You, too, Richard Lee. I'm ashamed of you!"

As if by magic the fray ceased, its cause turning muttering away, while Richard Lee, the young sailor, stood with bleeding knuckles, abashed, shame-faced, almost trembling, before the little queen, whose eyes flashed upon him angrily as she turned away; but only to stand again, scorching him as it were, for a few moments, as she glanced haughtily over her left shoulder, to repeat the words uttered but a few moments before—

"And you, Richard Lee, I thought better of you."

The next moment she had disappeared amongst the trees, and, relieved of the constraint caused by her presence, the other sailors began to banter and joke one another.

"You've put your foot in it this time, Dick Lee. Miss Lena will tell all about it up at the house, and your leave's stopped ashore."

"Won't there be a spell of scraping the chain-cable for him, that's all," laughed another.

"Less for us to do, my boys, eh?" said another.

"But what was the good of upsetting Jack Johnson about that nigger? He didn't hurt him much."

"Would you like to be hurt as much?" said Lee, firing up.

"Can't say as I should," was the answer.

"No, of course not," cried Lee, glad of having some one to attack—verbally, though, now—"of course not; and I'm sick of seeing the poor fellows treated as if they were no more than brute beasts. And as for Jack Johnson, I'd knock him over again if he did the same thing."

"If you'll take my advice, Dick Lee, you'll leave Jack Johnson alone. He isn't a pleasant fellow to affront. He's got his knife into you quite far enough, that's plain, and he don't forget being knocked down, I can tell you. But, howsoever, it's a great mercy as you didn't knock the liquor down too, for the land here's quite rich enough without being watered with rum. If I was you, I should fetch Jack back, and make it up over a glass."

The speaker, about the most bluff-looking of the sailors, but slightly grizzled with age, lifted up the rum vessel, and, winking solemnly at his companions, he took so hearty a pull that it seemed as though, should Jack Johnson be fetched back, there would be nothing left for the making-up draught.

"Jack Johnson will wait a long time before I fetch him," was the careless reply.

And the young sailor thrust his hands defiantly into his trousers pockets and walked away, while the rest of the party drew closer beneath the shade, to share the rum.

"Two less—two more whacks to divide, my lads, eh?" said Harris, the man who had given advice. "More for us, eh? But I say, my lads, just look at that now: them two chaps fighting as they did, and supposed to be about that black beggar, when he was only the stick as they fought with."

"When you've done p'lavering, p'raps you'll pass that grog," growled one of the party.

For the last speaker kept one hand tightly upon the liquor-vessel.

"Ay, ay—to be sure," he said, passing it, but somewhat reluctantly. "But only think of them fighting like that. Old story, my lads. If ever you

see two cocks pitching into one another, and sending the feathers flying, what's it about, eh? Why, about a hen, to be sure, as stands looking on, without a feather ruffled; and so it is where a couple of chaps get to knocks: sure to be a woman at the bottom of it."

"Why, there aint no woman at the bottom of this, anyhow," said one of the sailors.

"Aint there? Then what do you call that little dark-eyed lass up at the house yonder? Why, I see Jack Johnson and Dick Lee looking at one another as black as thunder when she came aboard the schooner with young miss, there, only yesterday, when the skipper had Mr. Ansdell aboard, and that long-legged, yellow-skinned Yankee cuss of an overseer of his; and him, too, watching every movement of the skipper, as was as civil as possible, though I'll swear he didn't want him there."

"He come afterwards, didn't he?" said one.

"To be sure he did: a couple of the plantation niggers paddled him off, and if ever I did see an unpleasant kind of a fellow it's him. Stars and stripes indeed! It's plenty of stars and stripes some of them poor beggars gets, I can tell you, from that thick cane of his, hang me if I shouldn't—"

"Air you speaking about me, my fren'?" said a rather high-pitched voice; "because, if you air, perhaps you'll say what you would do."

The sailor started, to see that he of whom he had spoken—a long, thin, bilious-looking American, dressed in white, with a broad-brimmed Panama hat, and a long, lithe cane in his hand—had suddenly stepped to one of the open windows of the warehouse, one door of which, opening to the grove, had enabled him to approach unperceived.

"I aint a-going to tell no lies," said the man, stoutly, as he folded his arms and looked doggedly at the new-comer, who stood smiling and showing a double row of exceedingly yellow teeth, while his dark, closely set together eyes twinkled maliciously. "I aint a-going to tell no lies, Master Jefferson. I was a-speakin' about you."

"I kinder thought so, my fren'. And now, p'raps, you'll have the goodness to say what you'd do with me?"

"Well, if I was skipper of our ship, and I ketched you licking one of our men as you lick your master's black cattle, hang me if I wouldn't pitch you overboard!"

The vessel of grog did go to water the rich earth, as the speaker rose to his feet in his excitement, and stood half expecting an attack; but the American only held out one finger at the sailor, in an ugly, warning way, as he said, in a disagreeable nasal tone—

"Don't you come up here any more, my fren'; but stop aboard the schooner. If there's any marder of thing to bring up, let some of your mates do it; for I tell you, tew wunst, this place is very onhealthy, and you mayn't find it agree with you. You belong to the sea, you do, so keep at sea; I belong to the shore, I do, and I'll keep ashore; but don't let you and me come together, 'cause we sha'n't mix. And now you've brought the stuff up here, I think you'd all better go, and be smart about it."

"I'll give orders to my men, thank you, Mr.

Jefferson," said a fresh voice; and the captain of the little trading schooner, who had just descended from the house, now stopped short by where the altercation was taking place. "I told them that they could rest a bit; and when I want them to go down to the ship, I shall tell them."

The tooth-baring smile faded quickly from the American's countenance, as he turned, not to face, but to direct one of his ears towards the fresh comer—a well-built, frank-looking young man of thirty—not handsome, but with a quiet, determined, manly look in his countenance, that spoke well for its owner's possessing a warm heart, as well as a resolute firmness of character.

He seemed to make no effort to conceal the dislike he apparently felt for the American, who gave his shoulders a shrug, and walked away—turning once, though, to dart a malevolent look at the young captain of the schooner, who now directed his men to go down to the vessel.

"Strange, though," he said, angrily, "that you men can't be ashore ten minutes without a quarrel: Dick Lee and Johnson fighting, and now you, Joe Harris, speaking rudely to Mr. Jefferson."

"No business to come listening, then—they as does never hears any good of themselves," growled the sailor.

The captain did not speak; but pointed in the direction of the little vessel, standing a few moments to see his men well on their way back before retracing his steps towards the glistening house half-way up the mountain's side.

CHAPTER II.—THE OVERSEER.

THERE was a grand view at the feet of George

Brand—Captain Brand, as he was generally called here—a view of nearly the whole of Plantation Island, lying like an emerald in a sapphire sea, with that sea stretching out far and wide, with water ever meeting the eye save on the north, where a faint, cloud-like line told that possibly land might be there. Alone in the waters of the Great Mexican Gulf the little island lay—the home of the few busy enterprising families who had settled there, with John Ansdell at their head, almost their whole communication with the rest of the world being through George Brand, whose little schooner traded to and fro, carrying the island produce of sugar, coffee, and turtles to Jamaica, and coming back laden with such necessities as the island did not produce.

But in spite of the glorious view, and the lavish bounties of nature, asking, on every hand, his admiring gaze, the young man strode up the steep road with frowning brow, and his mind set upon other things. For he was uneasy in his mind; he was not content with the state of affairs here in the island, and he was looking forward to his next trip, of two months' duration, in anything but a pleasant state of mind.

In fact, he was recalling—no, it needed no recalling—he was going over again in his mind the remarks made by the merchant to whom all the produce of Plantation Island was consigned. The remarks were made on the wharf, at Kingston, just before the little schooner set sail on its return, and they were to this effect—

"If anything goes wrong on the island, Brand, mind this, I'll make a contract with you."

If anything went wrong at the island! What was to go wrong? What did it mean? He had asked himself that question a score of times, as he would have asked the gentleman who made the enigmatical remark; but there was no opportunity for doing so, the merchant having nodded shortly, and returned, while the schooner required the presence of its commander.

As far as he could judge, Mr. Ansdell's affairs were in the most prosperous state—nothing, apparently, could be better; but, for all that, he was uneasy. The words had not been lightly uttered, neither were they spoken by one given to say much; and, besides, since his arrival this time, with those words in his mind, he had noticed matters that would probably at another visit have been passed by unheeded.

He had dined upon the previous evening at the House, as it was here called, *par excellence*; and there, to his great annoyance, he found Jefferson, the overseer of the plantation, present, evidently to share the dinner, they having parted only the hour before, taking different directions.

This set George Brand thinking again about the visit to his little vessel already alluded to here, when, unasked, Jefferson had presented himself at the side, and taken care to stay on board till Mr. Ansdell and his daughter Helena—Lena, as she was generally called—returned ashore.

There was that feeling of doubt and indecision in George Brand's breast which makes a man feel as if he were wandering in a confused labyrinth; and the thoughts that came thickly and fast always seemed to tend in one direction, and that was towards Phineas Jefferson. If there was anything wrong, and the old merchant's idea was not a mere surmise, Jefferson must be in some way connected with it; and if so, what of Lena?

George Brand quickened his steps as he thought; and he passed one turn of the road in time to hear a cry, and to see a sight which made him wince. On his left there was a large field of coffee, in which about twenty of the black hands were busily at work, tremulously eager, it seemed, to get on; for the cry the young sailor had heard came from a young girl, across whose bare shoulders the overseer's cane had descended heavily.

"A cowardly hound!" he muttered, angrily, stopping frowningly to look on.

Only some dozen yards separated him from where the overseer stood over the girl, and upon catching sight of Brand an evil smile came across his countenance; and as if to show his authority, he raised his cane, and once more it descended with a fierce swish upon the bare shoulders of the girl, who shrieked for mercy, as her soft black skin rose in great weals, to show where the blow had fallen.

It was too much for the equanimity of George Brand. Eager and passionate at what he termed gross brutality, he strode rapidly up to the overseer, and, with a voice hoarse with indignation, he exclaimed—

"Is your master aware, sir, of your brutal treatment of his slaves?"

The American did not reply, but the sallow look of his countenance told of his rage, as, raising the cane, half menacingly, he seemed, for a moment, as if about to strike his interlocutor; but the next moment he allowed it to fall once more upon the quivering flesh of the girl.

"You cowardly dog!" cried George, fiercely. "You dare not do that if Mr. Ansdell knew;" and, allowing indignation, dislike, and rage to get the better of him, he snatched the cane from the overseer's hand, seemed for a moment as if about to strike, but the next he had whirled it far away.

In an instant the American's face was distorted with passion, his hand was thrust into the pocket of his jacket, and it was evident that he was about to draw some deadly weapon; but, as if warned by the action, in another moment George Brand had a pistol in his hand, standing his ground firmly, while the American folded his arms, muttered something that the other could not hear, and turned away.

"How confoundedly unfortunate! How hot-headed and Quixotic I am!" said the young man, as he once more began to ascend the mountain road, with the air each moment seeming to grow purer and brighter—a brisk coolness, too, giving a terseness to every nerve and muscle as he passed on. "Here have I been wanting to be on the best terms with everybody, with what result? My men abusing the blacks, then disgracing themselves with a quarrel which she comes to stop; then another insults that yellow-skinned tiger; and lastly, after reproving them, I must needs go and quarrel with him myself."

He here came to a turn of the path, and started as if he had been stung; for about a couple of hundred yards in advance he saw that which sent all the blood rushing fiercely to his heart, bringing, as it were, upon its swift tide the recollection of a score of little things that now seemed to have grown in an instant to a magnitude that troubled him more than he could have expressed.

For there, having evidently taken a short cut across the plantation, so as to avoid the windings of the path, was Jefferson, walking side by side with, and talking earnestly to, Lena Ansdell, who was half turning to gaze in his face; but with what expression of countenance it was impossible to see.

For a few moments George Brand felt giddy: this was so different from anything he had before expected. But no, it was absurd—it was impossible; and, in his excited state of mind, he was ready to give every one the credit of being touched to the heart as he was himself.

And yet, upon the other hand, there were those many little instances of watchfulness upon the American's part, and his visit to the schooner now seemed to wear an air of importance which it had not before assumed.

Again he shook off the feelings, calling them folly; but everything seemed to lead towards adding some tiny fragment of evidence that his suspicions, now newly awakened, were correct. Otherwise, why did Lena Ansdell walk so quietly and patiently by the American's side, listening so attentively to all he said, even seeming to slacken her pace. It was, after all, only too plain, and during all these

voyages to and fro, while he had been fondly hoping that there might come a day when he could declare the love that had grown up for his employer's bright, sunny-faced child, there had been this snake, slowly but surely making his way, coiling himself tightly round his victim, and ensnaring, fascinating her, as it were.

"What a dolt I have been!" he groaned, "not to have known that a woman would not be content with worship at a distance: and besides, what am I, that I should presume?—the skipper of a wretched little coaster!"

He did not, in the bitterness of his spirit, think then to ask himself whether he had not as good a right to presume as the overseer, but followed the pair slowly up to the house.

CHAPTER III.—AFTER DINNER.

GEORGE BRAND'S intention, five minutes before, had been to complain to Mr. Ansdell of his overseer's brutality to those under his charge; but upon entering the pleasant open room, it was to find Jefferson comfortably seated in the verandah, lolling back in his chair, and smoking a cigar, while, quiet and subdued-looking, Mr. Ansdell was standing with one hand resting nervously upon a little table.

Lena was not there: she had evidently gone to lay aside her hat; and as the young skipper glanced round, it was to reddens directly after; for upon meeting the American's eye, he saw that he had been watching him, with a half-amused, half-contemptuous expression, one, however, which hardly veiled a malevolent twinkle of the close-set eyes: a glance which told George Brand plainly enough that he had made an enemy—one who would never forgive, and who would have as little scruple in destroying his life as he himself would in crushing that of some noxious insect.

That idea flashed across him, but it did not give him the trouble afforded by his second thought, which was concerning the overseer's position on the estate.

What did it mean? To an observer it seemed as if, since the young man's last visit, master and man had changed places, so calmly insolent was the one—so quiet, subdued, and humble the other.

"Ah, Brand!" exclaimed Mr. Ansdell, making an effort to welcome the strange arrival; "I am glad to see you."

But the side glance the speaker directed at his overseer almost belied the spoken words; and, plainer and plainer, each moment, could be seen that, for some hidden reason, there was a powerful constraint fettering him; and Brand felt chilled, grieved, troubled, more than he could express.

"Have you got well on with your lading, Brand?" said Mr. Ansdell.

"Yes, sir; I think I may say give the word the day after to-morrow, and we will be off."

"Heaven give you a prosperous voyage, Brand," said the old man, fervently.

"Amen to that, sir," said the skipper. "But don't alarm yourself about that: the hurricane season is past, and we shall soon run over."

"If you only knew how much depended—"

"Well, I don't know," drawled Jefferson; "but it strikes me that it aint wise to tell everybody all about your affairs."

"It strikes me," said Brand, sharply, "that it is not wise for the servant to interrupt his master."

"Look here, young man," said the American, leaning forward. "You're trying all you can to make me take you down a peg or two. I've put up with something this morning, and now I'm putting up with a bit more. You'll play with me till I bite!"

George Brand's angry retort was checked by an imploring glance from Mr. Ansdell; and to the young man's great surprise, his employer leaned towards the overseer, and whispered a few words.

"Let him keep a civil tongue in his head, then," was the surly response. "Look here, both of you: I'm like a lamb if I'm properly treated; but if I aint—"

What Mr. Jefferson might be, if improperly treated, he did not say; for at that moment Lena Ansdell entered, looking pale, anxious, and languid, while, when Jefferson rose, and, with an unpleasant smile, placed a chair for her, she glanced at her father, their eyes met, and then, as if moved thereto by his appealing glance, she glided to the seat, and sat patiently listening to the remarks of the overseer, who divided his time, apparently, into three parts; one being appropriated to paying compliments, the second to smoking, and the third to expectorating, in a most vigorous manner, right through the open verandah on to the flowers beneath.

Evidently in a constrained and uneasy fashion, Mr. Ansdell drew Brand aside, and began to talk to him about the most indifferent matters; and when, twice over, the young man led the conversation towards trade, he became aware of the fact that the American was listening intently, although, to a casual observer, perfectly *insouciant*; a glance followed, and Mr. Ansdell nervously led the conversation back to some unimportant subject.

"You will stay and dine with us, Brand," said the old man at last.

When there was a sharp, vicious look from Jefferson as, with his face drawn and agitated, Mr. Ansdell was about to speak again, when Lena half rose.

"Yes, you will stay with us, Mr. Brand," she said. "We have been most inhospitable this time, but we will try and make up for it now, before you go."

A moment before, bitter and despairing, George Brand was about to decline; for though apparently engaged in conversation with the old planter, he had been thoughtfully arriving at his own conclusions respecting the state of affairs—conclusions that merely wanted a little confirmation to make him set them down as correct.

For here was the servant almost assuming lordship in the house; the master was evidently afraid of him; and the daughter—

"Good heavens!" he thought, "is she to be sacrificed to that vile wretch?"

What could be the cause? There must be money in question. Up to now he had always thought Mr. Ansdell wealthy, and sorrowfully compared his own state of poverty; but the planter must be poor also,

and by some means—foul, the thinker felt sure—Jefferson had attained a most powerful ascendancy.

"To be sure," mused Brand, "money must be at the bottom of the affair; for what was said to me on Kingston Wharf, about anything happening at the Island?"

He could not help it: there was a feeling of exultation pervading his breast; and though he tried to crush it down, he knew that he was glad that Lena was poor. How his heart swelled at the thought of winning her love—of toiling for her; bringing to her his hard earnings, for those fair, soft arms to encircle his neck, those red pouting lips to cover his with kisses upon his return from a voyage! What happiness there might be for him in this world if—

"Then I'll set one of the cusses to pick a bunch of them every morning," said a harsh, grating voice; and George Brand was back in the reality of life once more.

"Thank you, Mr. Jefferson," was the reply; "I prefer gathering them myself."

"That's a lick for one of them, then," said Jefferson, grinning. "Do you know, Miss Lena, I allus lick a nigger whenever I'm disappointed. Now, a nigger I shall lick!"

A strange creeping sensation made every nerve and fibre in George Brand's body to thrill. There was an intense desire upon him to dash at the Yankee, and seizing him by the throat, to shake him till his teeth chattered in his head, and then to kick him ignominiously down the mountain side, to the bay, where he could have had him ducked by some of the schooner's crew. But he was compelled to sit and bear it all, for the Yankee was master of the situation.

It was a cruel task, though, for a young and ardent man to sit and listen to her he loved imploring almost that the flowers, already declined, might be brought—pitifully, painfully asking for them; since the young girl's gentle heart was moved, and she knew that her refusal would be torture to more than one poor creature beneath the ruffian's charge.

"Oh, I don't want you to have them without you like!" said Jefferson, surlily.

"But I'm sure Lena would like them, Mr. Jefferson," interposed Mr. Ansdell—"would you not, Lena?"

"Yes, papa," said the poor girl, pitifully, as she hung her head, her eyes being fixed determinedly upon her work; while the overseer feasted and gloated upon her as if trying to be as offensive as possible to the young man, who had to strive hard to restrain the passion bubbling up within his breast.

But he was its master; and there he sat, patiently hearing all—hearing, but comprehending nothing of the babble of the old man at his side, so engrossed was he with the sight before him in the verandah.

"I will have half a dozen words with her before I go," thought George Brand to himself. "It is no time to talk of love; but surely she must need some friend."

The dinner was served, though, and partaken of, without an opportunity occurring. It was very evident that Jefferson was watching him, as a cat might a bird; and unless something should occur to call him away, no opportunity would be afforded for a single

word. It was very evident, too, that poor Mr. Ansdell was to suffer for the lapse of which he had been guilty in proffering hospitality, for Jefferson's every word addressed to him was sharp, and almost insulting, as the meal progressed.

"Master—complete master," thought Brand.

And finding that Lena merely replied to his remarks in monosyllables, he confined his conversation to Mr. Ansdell, listening still, though, to Jefferson, and trying to scheme some plan for arriving at the true state of affairs.

Mr. Ansdell had a love for luxury, and although cooked and served by black slave girls, his dinner would have been relished in a London club, where its strange dressing, and tropic fruit and vegetables would have lent a piquancy sufficient to cover all demerits. There were wines, too, of good vintages; but no one seemed to pay much heed to the repast, except the overseer, who ate and drank heartily, laughing and talking loudly the while to Lena, who, pained and ready to burst into tears, seemed scarcely able to answer him.

"You'll use every care, Brand, during your voyage," said Mr. Ansdell, suddenly.

And on raising his eyes the young man became aware of the fact that his employer must have been drinking heavily, for his face was flushed; and he now took no heed of his overseer's warning growl.

"Surely, sir," said Brand, quickly, "you will soon see me back if the wind keeps fair."

"It is so im—"

"Hold your tongue there, will you?" said Jefferson, in a savage tone. "How many more times am I to tell you?"

Brand, in spite of himself, leaped to his feet, his eyes flashing, and the desire stronger than ever upon him to seize the Yankee and kick him out; but he saw only two soft, imploring eyes gazing full in his, and a look that said but too plainly—

"Oh! for my sake forbear."

Sinking back in his seat, he only allowed his eyes to rest upon those of the American, who, with an insolent stare, filled a glass with wine, and held it in his hand as if ready to toss it over the young man, but, changing his mind, drank it instead.

"I should think it's 'bout time you went back to your boat, isn't it?" said Jefferson, at last. "Them men of yours aint much to be trusted alone."

"I ought to apologise to you, Miss Ansdell," said Brand, quietly, "for their behaviour this morning: they are so little ashore that they are given to forget themselves."

"Yes," said Jefferson, who now had drunk sufficient wine to infuse a courage he did not naturally possess; "and no wonder, when their captain sets them the example."

There are limits to the reticence of the human being, and it was now evident that Jefferson had stepped beyond the bounds of endurance which confined the temper of George Brand. In a moment the peaceful, pleasant room, lit by its moth-circled lamp, the open window through which came the scent-laden breeze of evening, the silvery light flashing through the heavy green foliage without, even the presence of Lena was forgotten, and in another moment there would have been a passionate en-

counter, when a black ran through the verandah, peered for a moment into the room, and then leaped to where Jefferson, alarmed by this sudden apparition, had half started from his chair.

"What is it, Cato?" he asked, hoarsely.

"The boys, massa—twenty of 'em—down the wood—fetic' night—would go—broke away, and half-killed Brown Joe."

With a savage malediction, Jefferson, sober enough now, started towards the window.

He was back the next moment by Mr. Ansdell, who stared up at him half stupidly.

"Here, rouse up. D'yer hear?" he cried. "Get a gun and pistols. You, Cato, loose the dogs."

The black darted out without a word, but Mr. Ansdell barely moved.

"Do you hear?" exclaimed Jefferson, again shaking Mr. Ansdell violently. "They have broken out, and we shall have a row if we are not sharp."

"Yes, yes—I'm coming," said Mr. Ansdell, confusedly.

And hurrying into the next room, he returned with rifle and pistol.

"Now, then, be smart!" cried Jefferson, as at that moment from the trees outside came a low, deep bay, succeeded by an ominous growl. "Don't you be frightened, my dear; there's nothing to hurt," he continued, as he saw the pale face and horror-stricken looks of Lena. "I'll soon be back."

There was evidently something ominous in the news brought by the black, trifling as it sounded to one not versed in the habits of the slaves; and, with hands trembling with excitement, the overseer examined his pistols before returning them to his pocket, stepping then with Mr. Ansdell to the open window.

"But I say—here," exclaimed Jefferson the next moment. "You're coming to help?"

For a moment George Brand hesitated. He was no coward, but it had suddenly occurred to him that here was the opportunity for which he had been waiting all the evening. Such a chance might never occur for him again, and rising, he said, coldly—

"No, Mr. Jefferson: I have nothing to do with your slaves; I find it enough to do to control my men. You have urged the poor wretches to this by your brutality; now quiet them yourself."

The American's eyes literally blazed with savage rage, as his hand sought a pistol, his first intention being evidently to try coercion to force Brand from the house; and he glanced from him to the pale figure on the opposite side of the table again and again, betraying his thoughts only too openly, and determining the young man in his course. At that moment, though, another black bounded across a moonlit space outside, rushed to the window, and exclaimed:

"Quick, Massa Jeff'son, or dey all be gone!"

With a savage oath, the overseer ran to the window, dragging with him Mr. Ansdell, and then, turning, he shook his fist menacingly at Brand, and was gone.

CHAPTER IV.—SOMETHING VERY WRONG.

THE moment the room was clear, George Brand turned to Lena, who sat motionless almost with horror, gazing at him in a strange appealing way, that went to his heart.

"Yes," he exclaimed, interpreting that look; "but moments are precious. Tell me first what does all this mean? The slaves?"

"Yes—yes," exclaimed Lena, shuddering, as she made an effort to master her fear.

"They have been so ill-used by this man that they have risen?"

"Yes!" she exclaimed. "I have been dreading it for long enough."

"But his power? What does it mean? Pray, forgive me if I presume; but I have known Mr. Ansdell long. I love my old employer, and it is pitiful to see all that I have witnessed this evening."

"I don't know—I cannot tell—somehow he has obtained a complete mastery here. Papa has been led by him into some net, and he acts as ruler here. You know papa spoke—spoke of the vessel's safety?" she continued in broken words.

"Yes—yes," cried Brand, eagerly, as he crossed to where the agitated girl now stood, trembling violently.

"All his hopes depend upon it, and if it fails it is his ruin!"

"But it will not—it shall not fail!" cried Brand, passionately. "There shall be no ruin! But, Miss Ansdell—Lena—dear Lena—I have known you from a child. Do not think me presumptuous. I must speak before I am driven mad with what I see. You surely cannot—it is not true—this Jefferson—you do not love him?"

"Love him!" cried the poor girl, passionately; and then, with a shudder, she resumed her half-passive state. "It is papa's wish," she said.

"Impossible!" cried Brand. "It cannot be! He has been overcome in some way by this villain's cunning. I cannot bear even to think of it. It is no time now to talk of such matters; but pray, for your own sake—for the sake of those who love you dearer than life—let there be no more of this—this suitor's pretensions!"

"Please say no more to me!" said Lena, pitifully. "You cannot tell what I suffer. I must do what papa wishes; it is necessary. But he is in danger now. You will go to his help? What's that?"

George Brand did not answer, but while she spoke, he had, as he thought, seen a dark figure glide across the patch of light outside the window; and then it seemed to him that a black face, whose opal eyeballs he could distinctly see, was watching them from a clump of plants; while, the next instant, he could have sworn that he saw another face peering round one of the climber-hung supports of the verandah.

"It is nothing," he said, in reassuring tones.

And walking boldly to the window, he stepped out and looked round, seeing nothing, but fancying that he detected a retreating step.

The next moment, half expecting molestation as he did so, he quietly closed the windows, and drew over them the blinds, before returning to Lena's side.

"I am going after them now," he said; "and if it is necessary, I will get up the schooner's crew. Do not be alarmed for him; but, one moment, promise me that you will not be sold like this—that you will not give way. Dear Lena, there are others in the

world whose love you have not proved. Only give me time."

He spoke in broken, confused words, but their honest truth was in their pathos; and as Lena heard them, the tears fell fast, and sobs shook her frame.

"I cannot—I dare not! You do not know all! Pray leave me."

"But, Lena—dear Lena!" he exclaimed, passionately, seizing the little hand, which was not withdrawn.

And the next moment he held her tightly to his breast, with her poor fluttering heart beating against his own.

It was but for a fleeting moment—the next had seen her start away.

"Papa!" she exclaimed: "pray watch over him! Come here."

He followed her into the next room, in one corner of which stood a gun; and, seizing it, he saw that it was loaded, an open drawer supplying bullets and powder.

The next moment he was at the door, adjuring her to see that all was secure, and not to open, save to a white man's voice; when for an instant he again drew her towards him, and his lips lightly touched hers. Then, with a bound, he was hurrying off in the direction of the slaves' village, turning only once to see the light figure standing in the open doorway. Then the door was closed, and with nerves strung, heart exultant, and his veins throbbing with his new-found happiness, he hurried along.

He had not much difficulty, for though beneath the densely-foliaged trees all was intensely dark, here and there the moon broke through to silver some broad patch of the way—the well-beaten track which led to the cluster of huts inhabited by the slaves on Mr. Ansdell's estate. There were shouts, too, to guide him, and the loud baying of dogs, while from time to time he listened anxiously for gun-shots.

But none came. There was a louder shout, perhaps, now and then, to make him quicken his steps, though he was already running; and once or twice, too, he stopped short, as a rustling in amongst the trees told that either he was watched, or else that some half wild animal was fleeing, alarmed, from his steps.

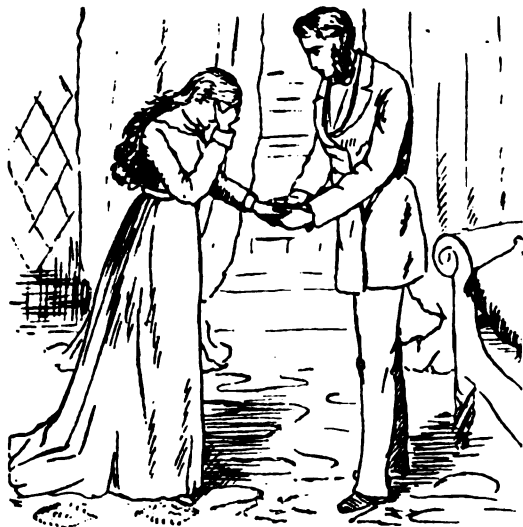
Emerging from the grove through which he had so far made his way, he now hurried along by the side of a large sugar plantation, the tall, green leaves softly waving in the breeze; and here there could be no mistake: a figure was evidently gliding along through the yielding canes, which bent, and moved, and rustled as it passed along, parallel with his course.

Twice he made a rush towards it; but the fugitive, or spy, was too active, and darted away from him; but upon his making another attempt, he neared his watcher, and pursued him rapidly, catching a glimpse more than once of a bent, running figure as it crossed some well-lit portion of the plantation.

"There must be something very wrong here," reasoned George Brand, as he panted on. "This fellow is evidently a scout, to see if help is coming."

CHAPTER V.—NOT SAFE.

NERVED by the thought that his capturing this man might—he knew not how—be the means of saving Lena Ansdell from danger, he ran on, gaining fast upon the fugitive, till he darted into another dense patch of verdure, when directly after there



arose howl, shriek, and cry, mingled with the savage, worrying growl of a dog.

Shouts, the report of a pistol, and the next moment, as the young man dashed into a glade, it was to see in the bright moonlight the recumbent figure of a black, with a dog standing upon him, his jaws open, and red tongue out, lolling and moving as the hound panted. Two other brawny-shouldered slaves were looking on, and both Mr. Ansdell and the overseer stood close by.

It was very evident that there was no danger, for they were returning from the village; but Jefferson was evidently deeply enraged, as he exclaimed—

"That's Joe, is it?" pointing the while to the fallen man.

"Yes, massas, dat's Joe," said one of the others, the first who had come with news to the house.

"Bring him up in the morning. Let him go now. Here, Fang!"

The dog left his victim, growling savagely, and followed his master, but turned his head from time to time, as if ready to make another dash at the fallen black. But the poor fellow did not move a finger, even though he was smarting from the wounds inflicted by the savage beast that had been set at him; and after a glance back at the slave, Brand followed in the wake of the overseer and Mr. Ansdell, neither of whom spoke.

From one of the slaves, though, there was plenty of information; but whether true or false, Brand could not tell; his experience of the love of exaggeration in the slaves, as a rule, tempting him to be-

lieve that the man's account was all invention, and that he had been instructed to hold his peace.

They were not long in reaching the house, where Lena was anxiously watching for their return; when, seeing that it would be out of place for him to enter, and content in his mind respecting the future, Brand took his departure—one glance, which he obtained at parting, seeming to bid him to be hopeful, and that all might yet go well.

That was a glorious walk, down the hill side to the ship: at every turn of the road there was some object of beauty to greet the traveller's eye. Now it was the heaving sea of verdure presented by some cane plantation shimmering in the moonlight; now the deep, dark mass of vegetation, where Nature held *fête*—a darkness relieved by flaming fire-flies. Down below was the beautiful little bay, a sheet of polished silver wherever the moonbeams fell; and it was with his heart light and exultant that George Brand strode on.

So, then, everything depended upon him—upon his making a quick and successful voyage, did it? How he would toil, then—how he would strive! He would hardly leave that deck night or day. What a pleasure it would be to return and defeat the machinations of that lank, sallow Yankee!

"Phew!" exclaimed Brand. "It makes me hot only to think of the wretch pestering my darling with his attentions. I reckon, though, that he will find things rather different now."

He seemed to forget that he was in a tropical island, and that the sensation of heat might proceed from the rapid rate at which he was walking.

But he did not continue that swinging down-hill walk to the end; for twice, in a sudden fashion, he stopped short upon hearing a rustling noise to the



right or left, and here again he obtained a glimpse of a broad black back, upon which the moon shone brightly for an instant.

"I shall not follow," muttered Brand. "Why should I? The blacks are watching me; but let

them. Poor wretches! they are slaves all day; night is their free time: let them enjoy it then. I should not be surprised, though, if they did turn upon their tormentors some day.

A profuse perspiration burst forth upon him now, as his active brain supplied him with a train of horrors, such as he had heard of being perpetrated before now; and if such a thing should happen, who would protect Lena?

"What a fool I am!" he said the next moment, laughing. "I've found a treasure, and I'm going to be always dreaming of being robbed. Eh! What! Why, what the deuce!" he exclaimed as a black figure darted out from a clump of bushes, laid a hand upon his chest, and as he felt a man's hot breath upon his face, a voice whispered—

"Massa skipper, no go dat way: not safe!"

As the man spoke, he pointed to another path by which the bay might be reached, but in a slow, circuitous fashion, and then, with a sudden leap, before he could be stayed, he plunged in amongst the dense growth and disappeared.

What did it mean? Was there anything wrong, or had they some fetich feast or mummery going on, which he might disturb?

That must be it, he felt sure, and it coincided with the alarm up at the house. There was evidently nothing serious likely to be the matter, or Jefferson would not have given up so soon. It was absurd to make mountains out of molehills; and as to going out of his way down a long-growth, tangled, seldom used path, when the regular beaten way was before him, that was out of the question.

"Besides," he said, half aloud, "how do I know that they don't want to lead me into a trap?"

He was so light-hearted that he was ready now to treat everything in the shape of trouble in the most cavalier manner; so treating the warning he had received with the greatest of contempt, he strode on, engrossed once more with the beauty of the moonlit scene; for your moonshine is wondrously beloved by your youth touched in love. All was now perfectly still, and he was getting close to the warehouse where his men had that afternoon been drinking. There was the schooner's light far below, and he could soon be on board. That had evidently been a trap to get him out of his way, for he did not even hear a rustle now of any one watching in the plantations on either side.

Another minute, and he was dreamily pursuing his way, mentally going through the incidents of the evening, and once more his heart began to swell with exultation, when, passing a part of the grove whence Lena had come to arrest the squabble between the sailors, there was a faint click heard, and a few seconds after—

Crack!

The sharp report of a rifle rang out, to be taken up again and again by the echoes, fainter and fainter each moment, to die away in the distance.

But before the first echo had repeated itself, George Brand had plunged into the wood on his left, for a bullet had whistled by his ear, and he knew that his cowardly assailant must be close at hand, even where he had seen a flash.

It was but the work of moments; but though he

dashed here and there through the dense leafage, it was in vain: the darkness was here intense; and though he stopped and listened, no rustling leaf, no cracking twig told of an escaping enemy; and at last, more troubled in mind than he cared to own



even in himself, he retraced his steps, vainly trying to conjecture why he should have been fired at.

"I won't think that—I will not give him the credit, base as he is, of so scoundrelly, so murderous an attempt as that. Perhaps, after all, it was only some poor slave firing at a night bird."

Trying to win himself over to that way of thinking, he somewhat quickened his steps, till, reaching the little wharf, a hail brought a boat from the schooner, and he was pulled on board, to find that there was nothing to report, and soon after, he was dreaming of a bright future—heat, mosquitoes, tropic noises of the night, nothing having any effect in producing the wakefulness that might have been expected from one so touched to the heart.

CHAPTER VI.—HARRIS'S ADVICE.

THE rising sun found George Brand busy superintending the lading of his little vessel, so as to get a good stroke of work done before the heat should make the men sluggish. The tackle was rigged, the schooner warped in close to the wharf, and, one after another, the large sugar hogsheads waiting were rolled to the sides, par-buckled over a strong gangway, previous to being lowered into the hold and carefully stowed, the spaces between each being well wedged up with cocoa-nuts in their husky, fibrous envelope, till the last hogshead was stowed, when a lighter task began, namely, that of filling up with coffee-bags—a dozen of the slaves being marched down by Jefferson to take part in that task, to the great relief of the sailors, who had looked on with a grim feeling of satisfaction.

"It must be a rare fine thing to have one of them woolly nightcaps instead of hair to keep the sun off,

eh, Dick?" said Harris, the advice-giving sailor of the day before, speaking to Richard Lee, who was wiping the perspiration from his forehead.

"I'd rather have my own, and keep it off with a straw," was the reply, as Lee seized one of the coffee-bags and fastened it to the whip that was to lower it down the hold.

"I say," said Harris again, "what call has Jack Johnson to be so jolly thick with Mr. Overseer there? Every time he's been on the wharf they've had a palaver together. But, I say, Dick, did you see how pretty the skipper and that Jefferson looked at one another? Hang me, if the Yankee didn't look as if he'd like to chaw the skipper up! Phew!"

The whistle he gave at the end of this speech was upon seeing the start given by his brother-sailor, just as a bright-eyed girl, whose creamy complexion, mantling warm in the sun, told of a slight mingling of the Creole blood, stepped up to where Jefferson sat astride of a cask, snoking, and opening and shutting a large clasp-knife, which he struck at times viciously into the wood, when he shouted an order to one of the slaves.

The girl's mission was plain enough, for she handed a note to the overseer, and then stopped, waiting for a reply, glancing coquettishly at Johnson, who, with one hand to his face to hide a bruise, was evidently passing some compliment. Then she looked towards the ship, turned her back, and began to talk earnestly to the sailor by her side.

Richard Lee gave vent to a sigh that was almost a groan, as he dragged away at the coffee-bags, till Jefferson wrote something on the note with a scrap of pencil, and handed it back to the girl, who gave one more coquettish glance at the vessel, and then tripped off.

"Ah, Dick!" said the old sailor, "they're rum cattle, women."

"Mind your own business, will you?" said the other, still toiling away unnecessarily hard at his work.

"That's my business, my lad; my business is always to give a bit of advice when I can. If I'd had a chance yes'day, I should have advised you not to fight with Jack Johnson; and if you'd ha' took that advice, you'd have had some grog. But just you look here, my lad: here's you and the skipper both making o' yourselves uncomfortable about the lasses. You've had your bit of a turn-up with Jack, and made an enemy of him; and it strikes me that the skipper has had his bit of a turn-up with that long, yaller caterpillar of a chap—all legs, you know. You both pretend it's about one thing, when it's about another. Now, then, lower away!"

The bag they were securing was lowered, Lee not saying a word; when an incident occurred upon the little wharf which, for a few moments, took up the attention of all around.

One of the blacks, in carrying his bag of coffee, managed to trip against a rope lying on the wharf, and fell; the bag burst, and the coffee-beans, to the number of a few hundreds, were scattered about the wharf.

Leaping up, the poor fellow, foreseeing his punishment, turned to flee; but he was too late: with one bound Jefferson had leaped from his seat, and with

the hand containing the closed jack-knife, he struck the slave right on the temple, felling the man on the instant, for him to rise slowly, staggering, half-stunned, and bleeding.

"Hang me, Dick Lee!" growled Harris, "if I shouldn't like to advise you to serve him just the same, but I won't; it might end in a row. I'll advise myself instead to hold my tongue, and I'll take that 'ere bit of advice as soon as I've said as they uses them black niggers worse than so much cattle!"

"Ten times," said Lee, frowning, as he saw the slave come cowering back at his driver's orders, and begin to pick up the coffee, shrinking as he did so like a beaten hound.

"I'd give that old caterpillar a bit of advice, too, only he ain't worth it—a leggy cuss!"

"What would it be?—to go and drown himself?" said Lee, bitterly.

"No, not exactly; but I'd advise him not to be quite so handy a-kicking and a-hammerin' of them poor black beggars. They don't forget it, lor bless you! and you may depend upon it, Dick, if ever they got the upper hand of Mr. Overseer there, they'd make it very hot for him!"

"And serve him right!" said Lee, in an undertone.

For at that moment he became aware that the skipper was close at hand, looking with a troubled face at Harris, who was now, though, as busy as the rest of the crew.

"Got 'em aboard fast, sir, now," said the old sailor.

"Yes, yes," said Brand, impatiently; "but what made you say that about the blacks? Do you think there is likely to be anything wrong?"

"No, sir; only I argufies like this, when I says to you, if you're driving a jackass, and have a stick with a nail at the end: 'Don't go a-sticking it into him allers, or, as sure as he's a jackass, he'll kick some day.'"

George Brand walked impatiently away to where there was a little awning spread over the deck; and then, evidently ill at ease, he stood smoking a cigar, and furtively casting a glance from time to time at where the overseer was bullying and hectoring amongst the slaves.

"No; I ain't heerd nothing," said Harris, tugging away at another coffee-bag; "but I've seen something, and it'll come sooner or later, Dick—mark my words if it don't. It'll be a row—a reg'lar hot row; and if everybody as lives here took my advice, they'd live somewhere else."

"Don't get croaking!" said Lee, angrily. "What's the good of that? What have you seen?"

"Oh, I've seen these poor chaps, that shrinks and lies flat while they're hit and cuffed about, roll their eyes after in a way that don't look nice, say what you will of it; and what I've got to say to you, Dick Lee is: don't you get kicking and cuffing of 'em about. Keep on taking t'other side, same as you did yes'day, and they won't forget it."

The hot hours coming, the sailors' task was at an end; for in the latitude where they were, it was impossible for any one but a negro to bear the full force of the sun in the middle of the day. But the slaves kept on with their part, bringing down bag after bag of coffee till evening, when the work was

resumed by those on board the schooner; and towards night, Brand knew that there was nothing to prevent his sailing some time during the next forty-eight hours.

He would gladly have gone up to Mr. Ansdell's house, and knowing, as he did, that the overseer would probably be there, he suffered no slight torment of a jealous nature. But there was ever the thought before him that, by hurrying on his departure, he was serving her, and therefore he restrained the feeling that prompted him to leave the vessel, and spent the evening busily over preparations that at another time he would have put off till the next day.

Completely tired out at last, he cast himself into his cot. He had taken his customary look round, and seen that all was well. The vessel lay well out in her moorings, head fast to the buoy, to which she had been warped as soon as the evening's lading had been ended; there was the regular watch set—two trustworthy men, one of whom was Johnson, and the other a half-breed, who had made several voyages with them.

But, somehow, that night George Brand could not sleep. He turned, and turned again, rose and altered the wind-sail, lit and half-smoked a cigar, rolled restlessly about till he was hotter than ever; but sleep, woo her as he would, proved coy, and he lay, at length, thinking of the past, of the present, of the future; and while elate with his hopes, and feeling certain that if Mr. Ansdell's prospects could be ameliorated by the success of this voyage, the evil time was nearly over, he could not help being troubled at the weakness the old planter evinced, and the complete mastery that seemed to have been obtained by Jefferson.

"I believe he would gladly put an end to me if he could," thought George. "I wonder whether he fired that shot directly or indirectly. If I could only tell, hang him! I'd—I'd—I'll tell you what I'd do: I'd take half a dozen men, and we'd kidnap him. We'd carry him on board, and take the miscreant to Kingston, where they would try the murderous scoundrel. But there! I'm out of sorts, and given to putting the worst construction upon everything. The man's not so black as I am trying to make him out. He's bad enough, no doubt; but my feelings carry me away."

Three hours had nearly passed since he came down below, and at last, utterly worn out with seeking for sleep, he rose and quietly slipped up on deck, to find that it was intensely dark, a thick veil of clouds spreading over the heavens, while the shore was not visible on account of the dense mist that was floating over the bay. There was something oppressive in the soft, damp, stifling heat, for not a breath of air relieved it, save now and then when a hot puff, as from the mouth of a furnace, seemed to cut through the mist, which, however, obtained the mastery again directly.

He walked to the side and leaned there, looking in the direction of the plantation-house, the lights of whose windows were always visible of an evening from the bay; but now the mist shut in the vessel completely, and, with a sigh, Brand walked forward and leaned over, to become aware that a boat was

close under the bows—a canoe, apparently, though he could not distinguish its size.

"A-hoy! what boat's that?" he shouted.

There was no answer, only the sound of paddles vigorously applied; and, turning hastily, Brand became aware that the watch was apparently not on deck.

This discovery put the boat out of his mind on the instant; for though it might have been manned by lawlessly-disposed negroes, who had intended to silently board the ship for the sake of what scraps of rope or loose gear they could find about, it was evident that they had not been on board, since it was probable, now he thought of it, that he had been leaning over the side during the last twenty minutes.

The idea occurred to him, though, directly after, that it was possible that the two men had taken their own boat, and he had gone forward just in time to hear them push off to go ashore.

Going aft, though, he soon found that this was not the case, since the only boat lowered down was swinging now at the end of her painter.

The next minute Brand was on the forecastle, and upon hearing his summons, Lee and Harris hurried on deck with a lantern, when a short search showed them Johnson and the half-breed curled up beneath the bulwarks fast asleep: a bottle, whose odour proclaimed strong rum, telling its own tale as it lay empty, clasped tightly round the neck by the half-breed's grimy hand.

"Where did they get that?" said Brand, kicking the bottle along the deck.

"Can't say, I'm sure," said Harris, rubbing his head and looking at Lee, who remembered the conversation between Johnson and the overseer upon the wharf. The next moment Brand also recollected that conference, and he stood for a few seconds trying to connect one thing with the other; but there was no tangible point for him to take hold of—nothing but the bare facts that he had heard a canoe under the bows paddling away, and that these two men had by some means obtained possession of a bottle of rum, and proved faithless to their task.

"I'll talk to them in the morning," said Brand, turning away. "Whose watch is it next?"

"Dick Lee's and mine. If you'll take my advice," said Harris, gruffly, "we'll keep it—eh, lad?"

Richard Lee gave a ready assent; and, satisfied with those to whom he had now entrusted the deck, the young man lay down once more, to fall into a troubled sleep, in which he saw blacks swarming over the sides of the vessel, and slaying the crew till the decks were slippery with blood. Soon after, he was struggling to reach Lena, who was calling to him for help, while he was held down from aiding her by Jefferson, who had writhed and twined himself round him like some huge serpent, and his head, with its glistening eyes, was apparently moving to and fro, coming nearer, retreating, but always seeming as if about to strike with the glistening teeth, which showed beneath its tightly-drawn lips.

He roused himself from that by a strong effort, but only to plunge into other troublous dreams, till, with a sigh of satisfaction, he awoke to find that it was once more day.

CHAPTER VII.—AT SEA.

A GLANCE round the vessel the next morning showed nothing to be missing: all was as usual; and shaking off his wild thoughts with the mist that was chased away by the bright morning sun, Brand had the vessel once more warped in close to the wharf, finished the lading, gave instructions for water to be got on board, and then started off to the plantation-house, to announce to Mr. Ansdell that he intended to sail that night.

Jefferson was present, looking blacker and more bitter than ever; for since the visit of George Brand, the overseer had found a marked difference in the behaviour of Lena. Hope had dawned in the poor girl's breast, and while trembling for her boldness, she had kept aloof, avoiding her persecutor in a decided manner, till, in his rage, he had loudly threatened to bring her to her senses in a way which she little expected.

Brand tried hard to obtain a few minutes with Lena alone; but he soon found that if he sought for that, he would have to postpone his sailing from day to day; and, with a sigh, he acknowledged that it would be far better to hasten his departure yet more. Though he knew that it was likely to prove to the overseer's disadvantage if the voyage was hastened, and the vessel returned speedily, yet, probably from an intense dislike to the young skipper's presence, Jefferson seemed to fall in eagerly with his sailing that night; and Brand left the plantation-house before sundown, one long, lingering pressure of Lena's hand seeming to bid him hasten back to her and her father's help.

The next minute, not daring to look back, he was hurrying down the steep mountain path to reach the wharf, where, giving his orders, sail after sail was shaken out, the hawser was cut loose from the buoy, and they slowly stood out from the island towards the deep blue sea beyond the bay, Brand shading his eyes again and again to catch a glimpse of a waving signal of farewell where none was to be seen.

He had one recollection to carry with him across to the larger island, and that was the scowling, malignant face of Jefferson, who stood upon the wharf watching the vessel till she was clear of the bay; and there was also another remembrance of a few words he had heard Harris let fall as he was helping Lee to sheet home the mainsail, and those words were—

"Take my advice, Dick, and keep at sea.' Depend upon it, lad, we're a deal safer out here than that lubber is ashore!"

How the breeze filled out their sails as they rode clear of the island, and the little schooner began to dance over the long rollers! There was a coolness that was delightful; and free of the close, relaxing atmosphere of the bay, new vigour seemed to be imparted to each frame, so that every order was obeyed with alacrity, and all was soon clear, and the schooner running, with all the canvas she could carry, before the wind.

The stars came out bright and beautiful, glittering from an arch of blue that was almost black in its intensity; there was peace everywhere around,

the men sitting about, chatting and smoking; but in the breast of George Brand all was tumult. Those two recollections filled him with forebodings. Had he done right in leaving Lena near that unscrupulous scoundrel who, he now felt certain, had either fired, or caused to be fired, the shot that went whistling by him so closely? and was there any peril in the island? was there any other danger to fear? He knew that there were about a hundred and fifty slaves on the estates, while the whites who had chosen the fertile little place for their home did not number a dozen, all told.

Surely there could be nothing to fear; and, besides, Lena had always been most kind and gentle to every slave upon her father's estate.

"They must love her—they could not help it," said George, half aloud.

And nursing that thought in his breast, he worked hard to convince himself that there was nothing to fear, and that all he had to do was to carry on all sail, and return as quickly as possible, to the eternal confusion of Jefferson, who would be compelled to hide his diminished head.

The next day came with favouring breezes, and the little schooner raced along. The next day, too, the wind favoured them; but somehow they did not make so much way, and old Harris expressed his opinion that the schooner's bottom must be getting foul.

"You'll have to careen her, sir, when we get into harbour. She's got barnacles and weed enough upon her to spoil any vessel's sailing; and it's rather hard on her. Take my advice, sir, and have it done."

"But she sailed well enough yesterday," said Lee, uneasily.

"The wind was abaft then, my lad," said Harris; "now it's well off the lee beam. She'll go it easily enough to-morrow."

The morrow came, and an anxious day it proved; for the wind had chopped round right ahead, and a heavy sea was running, while the schooner did not seem to ride over the waves according to her custom.

"The cargo can't have shifted?" said Brand to the old sailor, in whose opinion he always placed great confidence.

"Shifted? Not it! I see as every cask was rammed tight in its place, and there's nothing there to move. She's opened a seam somewhere, and it's my belief there's a lot of water in her, cap'en."

An examination proved that the opinion was perfectly correct, and in half an hour a pump was busily at work sending a full stream of water out of the scuppers, but apparently with no effect on the vessel, for it soon became evident that water was pouring in below fast; and upon measuring the well, it was found that one pump was not sufficient to keep the water under, and another was rigged, the men working in spells till, utterly tired out, they stopped short all at once, and stood looking at one another in despair.

"Come, my lads, this won't do," said Brand, laying hold of one pump-handle, while a bitter feeling seemed to press heavily upon his heart. "Here, Harris, Lee—lay hold here! Recollect, my lads, we have a valuable cargo on board, and we must save it, or ruin waits those at the island," he added, in an

undertone. "She will float long enough to run into harbour, I hope. If she will not, there are the boats, and we can always make for one of the islands."

The men took their cue from their energetic young commander, and worked away with a will, telling one another, as the water foamed out of the scuppers, that they were getting the better of it now; and so they toiled on till, utterly worn out, they paused to eat some biscuit, and partake of the rum liberally passed round.

At the end of ten minutes, Brand called them to their task again, himself setting the example; but there was the report of him who had sounded the well to destroy all their further energy, for that report was to the effect that, in spite of all their efforts for some time past, the vessel had made another foot of water.

"What does this mean, Harris?" said George Brand, looking his old fellow-voyager full in the face.

"Mean, sir," said the sailor. "Well, I don't know; but if this here ship was highly insured, and it would answer anybody's purpose well if she was to be lost, I should say that she had been——"

"What?" exclaimed George; for the other had paused.

"Scuttled!" said the old sailor, emphatically. "Take my word for it, sir, there ain't no seams opened: the schooner's too true for that; but there's something wrong somewhere."

George Brand turned sharply away, and walked aft, for a flood of recollections was sweeping through his brain; and as he turned away, the sailor stared after him, and shook his head.

"Scuttled, Dick Lee—scuttled, mark my words if she ain't; but keep it dark, or there'll be a rush for the boats. I don't like him turning away like that, though; it don't look well."

But Harris, old and experienced as he was, could not read men's minds. He could not comprehend the puzzling whirl of thought that was then troubling George Brand, as he tried to reach the light hidden somewhere in a chaos of dark confusion.

Mr. Ansdell's future depended upon the safe passage of the ship, and her return, he reasoned at last, trying hard to piece together a trustworthy line of thought. If, then, Mr. Ansdell was well placed at the end of this trip, it would be to the disadvantage of Jefferson, who was evidently strengthening himself upon his employer's misfortunes. It was, then, to Jefferson's interest that the schooner should not return. Would he, then— Nonsense! impossible! No man could be such a fiend—it was out of all reason.

But then that boat, canoe, or whatever it was—what was it doing under the vessel's bows in the dark night? The men of the watch, too, both drunk; and that rum, too, where did it come from? Had not Johnson been talking to the overseer upon the wharf time after time?

"I won't believe it, though—it's impossible!" exclaimed George, half aloud.

"She's been scuttled, though, all the same," said a voice.

And turning, the young skipper found himself face to face with Harris.

"How long will she float?" said George Brand, abruptly.

"Four and twenty hours if we leave her alone, eight and forty if we keeps the pumps going," was the reply.

And then the young commander turned to look the difficulty full in the face.

"Look here, my lads," he said, firmly, to the men, who had clustered near one of the boats. "The weather is soft and calm, we've nothing to fear there; and as we've no women nor children with us, if the boats are over the side, and ready with biscuit and water, we can jump over into them at any time. So, now, look here. There are the two boats; lower them down, and in with some provision. Half of you can do that; you others set that flying jib and square-sail. Harris, go to the wheel, and keep her well before the wind. We may run her ashore; if we don't we shall have some miles less to row. But, at all events, we'll stick to the ship to the last moment. She shall forsake us, my lads; we won't forsake her!"

"Hooray!" cheered one of the men.

And the rest set to work to obey their orders with the greatest alacrity. The boats were lowered over the sides, plenty of stores were placed in them, and then, a good length of rope being paid out, they were allowed to tow astern in the midst of the foaming water in the schooner's wake; for in the meantime the sail that had been added made her plunge on through the tops of the long, heavy rollers, dipping more than once so as to ship a little sea, which came tearing fiercely across her deck.

And yet it was a bright, glowing day, the breeze fresh, and the blue waters capped with glistening, pearly foam. It seemed hard to believe that there was danger on board; and only those familiar with the schooner's water-line would have noticed how deep she was in the water. The pumps had now been given up; but, as a last resource, Brand was having a couple of spare sails drawn under the vessel's bows, in the hope that the canvas might cross the leak, and to some extent check the influx of the water.

That it was a hopeless task seemed to be the opinion of half the men on board; old Harris, at the wheel, expressing himself pretty plainly on that subject to Lee, who had just come aft.

"Might ha' spared himself the trouble, Dick; but he's doing his best."

But, in spite of doing his best, now that every possible effort had been made, George Brand felt his heart sink. Here was the end, then, of all his sanguine hopes. His enemy had been more cunning than he, and the old man's prospects, already dim, were to fade into absolute nothingness. And Lena?

A groan escaped from him as he now saw that he had been worsted in the struggle. It was all plain enough: a few holes bored with an augur just above the water-line, and these the additional lading had placed below, when his hasty departure had prevented the slight amount of water already shipped from being noticed.

Here, then, was to be the end; but he would fight to the last.

CHAPTER VIII.—THE SINKING VESSEL.

"HOW'S the water, Dick?" said Harris, who was still at the wheel.

"Rising fast," replied the young sailor, who had just been below.

"I wish she'd rise fast, too, Dick," said the other, as he eased the vessel off a point or two. "She's like a log, and it's awfully queer work this. I don't seem to know her. Such a craft as she was, too! ready to ride over everything; but, Heaven save us, what's that?"

The old sailor's exclamation was drowned by a tremendous crash; for, just as he was speaking, his eyes fixed forward the while, he saw the deck about the forecastle heave up, one side of the schooner seemed to be dashed out, and, as the men rushed aft to reach the boats, the water seemed to leap in with a fierce rush, causing the vessel to settle down rapidly by the head.

For the next few moments it was a wild struggle for life—some men leaping overboard at once, and swimming for the boats, others dragging at the painters; but many seconds had not elapsed before every soul had left the deck of the sinking vessel, and all were fighting for a place in the boats, in which, one helping the other, they were soon all seated.

Meanwhile, with a slow, rolling motion, the vessel heaved here and there, as if restlessly turning from side to side before making her final plunge into the darkness below. Her sails flapped and shivered, one splitting with a loud noise like the report of a gun, and then, as in speechless terror the men watched her, the schooner gave one final roll, and plunged head-first down, the air escaping from her with a loud hiss, and blowing up a part of the after-deck. She had already begun to sink, the stern rising slightly the while, when one precaution which ought to have been taken was for the first time forcibly drawn to the attention of the crew—their painters were still made fast to the vessel, and if, in another moment, they were not loosened, the boats must be dragged down.

"Here! quick—quick!" half shrieked Brand. "In both boats there—the painters!"

A rush was immediately made; but the ropes were already tightening. It was a matter of life or death, and even if cast loose, they might be dragged down into the vortex made by the sinking ship.

"Quick, there—quick! Can't you cast loose?"

"No, no, no—it's too tight!" yelled the first seaman.

"A knife, then—cut away!" cried Brand.

But there was no knife forthcoming; and now, as if gaining speed, the vessel glided down beneath the troubled waters.

Though George Brand looked so eagerly up towards the house as his vessel sailed slowly out of the harbour, and then turned away disappointed that there should be no farewell waved to him by way of encouraging him in his task, there were longing, aching eyes watching the little vessel, and trying hard to distinguish his figure amidst the busy little throng coming and going, as they fulfilled the

many little duties of the deck. And those eyes would have watched until the coming night had dimmed, and then blotted out, the taper masts with their well-filled sails and net-work of rigging, but that their gaze fell for a moment upon the path below the house, to see that Jefferson was coming up with long, impatient strides, when, with a shiver of terror, Lena Ansdell glided away.

Jefferson caught sight of her, though, before she went, and waved his hand in a half-beckoning manner, as if bidding her stay; and then, with the corners of his mouth drawn back in a long, thin smile, he came close up to the house, altered his mind, and turned off to walk through one of the plantations, where some sixteen or eighteen of the slaves were at work.

It was strange to see the abject shiver of dread which ran through each shrinking form as the overseer approached, some of the slaves gazing down intently upon their work, others vying with each other as to who could be the most servile to the tyrant, who glanced here and there for a chance to find fault and administer punishment.

He was not long in discovering something. The cane he carried whistled through the air, and came down upon a shining black back.

There was a yell, a leap forward, and then, hoe in hand—a weapon with which its stout wielder could easily have stricken down his tormentor—the black stood at bay.

"Do you call that work?" cried Jefferson. "If you don't bend that back of yours, and send that hoe in a little farther, I'll have you flogged."

The man did not answer; but there was such a sinister leer upon his face, as he once more bent to his work, that Jefferson took another step forward, and again brought down his cane upon the bare back, making a long ridge of flesh to rise as if by magic. But this time there was no yell—no leap forward. Save for the mark, the blow might have fallen on something inanimate.

Jefferson stood aghast for a few moments, utterly taken aback. He recovered himself, though, the next minute; and, darting forward, he rained a shower of blows upon the offending slave, the others pausing from their work and looking on. But though the pain must have been intense, the victim of Jefferson's brutality did no more than wince slightly from time to time, till the overseer walked scowling away, his glance falling first on one, then upon another bending figure—all busy, though, now, tearing up the soft, rich soil with their clumsy hoes.

"Here, you!" shouted Jefferson, when he had walked on about fifty yards. And the black deputy who had brought the news of the *émeute* to the house came running up. "What does all this mean?"

"Done no, massa. All sulky, and laugh at me and Brown Joe."

Jefferson walked, scowling, away, for a few yards before turning, and once more beckoned up his assistant.

"Look here, Cato," he said, pointing to a pistol in his pocket. "You remember Sake, don't you?"

"Yes, massa—member Sake," said the negro, shuddering.

"Now go, then, and tell them all about him; for

mind this: I'm not going to be played with. You understand?"

The black nodded, and rolled his great opal eyeballs. He seemed for a moment as if about to speak, and his lips moved; but if he had anything to utter, whether warning or request, it was checked by the overseer's imperious gesture, and the black ran off towards where the slaves were at work.

Jefferson made as if about to go back to the house; but a feeling of uneasiness prompted him to go on to field after field, where there were men at work, and at every place there was an ominous silence. Twice he struck some poor toiling hand, but only to find that the blows which used to draw forth yells and appeals for mercy were now suffered with a strange calmness; and he turned away at last, wiping the perspiration from his forehead, though he smiled a sickly smile, and muttered something about flogging; and then he turned round again, to find that the men were watching him, though they resumed their work as soon as they saw that they were observed.

"There's something wrong with 'em, cuss 'em!" growled Jefferson to himself, as he tried to shake off a strange, uneasy feeling that troubled him. "They'd better be careful, though—they'd better be careful."

His thoughts were turned in another direction the next moment by a glimpse he obtained of the house above; and a grim smile crossed his lean face, puckering up his eyes, and forming long, ugly crows'-feet at his temples, as he thought of the success of his long years of scheming against a weak man, whom he had now so far enmeshed that, as Lena Ansdell truly said, unless the schooner made a safe voyage, the plantation—all must pass into the hands of the overseer.

"I aint worked for nothing," muttered Jefferson.

And then he turned, and shaded his eyes with his hand, as he gazed out seaward with a strange, wild, anxious stare.

Five minutes later he was with Mr. Ansdell, taking his seat with all the quiet assumption of right, while the old man seemed to shrink away, half in dread, while his persecutor sat and smoked, and stared him full in the face.

The lamp was lit, and the moths circled busily round the shaded flame, which was softened and subdued by a thickly-ground globe; but Jefferson shaded his eyes further with one hand, as he leaned across towards Mr. Ansdell.

"Why don't Lena come down?" he said.

The old man started, for until now his child's name had never been uttered by his overseer without the prefix, Miss.

"She is unwell to-night," he said, sadly. "I think she has gone to bed."

"Now look here, Ansdell," said Jefferson, in harsh, grating tones, "don't you try to play fast and loose with me. Recollect, every penny of money I advanced you for your speculations was my honest earnings. You can't pay them advances back; so, according to agreement, you must give up the plantation. It's of no use for you to sulk about it: 'taint pleasant—'twasn't pleasant for me to let you have my money; but you'd have been ruined years

ago if I hadn't. You ought to be pleased, then, now, to have so easy a creditor—one who's ready to let you off so light. You ought to be grateful, you know."

"I am grateful, Jefferson—very grateful," quavered the old man, helplessly.

"You have a very rum way of showing it, then, that's all I can say. Why, if I'd been any one else, I should have put in claims two years ago, and you'd have had to make tracks; 'stead of which, what do I do? I let you go on easy, and even find you more money, and I say to you: 'Look here, I won't turn you out. I've a kind of fancy for that little girl of yours; I'll marry her, and then we can all live comfortable together.' What more can you want?"

"But the schooner? We have had a good season. Her cargo will go a long way towards freeing me, Jefferson," said the old man, pitifully. "I want to pay you."

"Dessay you do," was the cool reply; "but now things have gone so far, perhaps I don't want to be paid. Fust, I shouldn't consider myself paid if you laid down every shilling on the table now!"

The old planter groaned.

"Now, look here," continued Jefferson, brutally; "it's of no use for you to look black, and to make a fuss, and go on reckoning about the schooner coming back, because she won't come."

"Won't come!" echoed Mr. Ansdell, half rising from the table.

"Sit still, and don't get play-acting that fashion," said Jefferson, coolly lighting a fresh cigar. "No; I don't think she'll come. Every vessel a'most goes to the bottom sooner or later; and if they do go it's always at the time they can least be spared; and as she's never happened anything yet, now's the time—safe."

Mr. Ansdell leaned his elbows upon the table, and buried his face in his hands.

"There, don't go on like that," said the overseer. "Take it like a man; and look here—I want to have a few words with you about her, you know."

Mr. Ansdell's hands fell from his face, and the light of the lamp fell upon a countenance that was pitiful in its helpless misery.

"Look here," said Jefferson, "I want you to talk to her a bit—to let her know a little more strongly that it is to be, and that, too, directly. I'm not going to wait and hang about while she goes through all her woman's fids and fads and ways. Tell her it must be directly; and, look here, Ansdell. I'm going to stay here to-night—fact, I think I shall stay here altogether now. 'Taint convenient going backwards and forwards; and besides, the blacks have got a sulky fit on, and I fancy they may be a bit out of a night."

Without a word, Mr. Ansdell rang a hand-bell; a black servant girl entered, the necessary orders were given, and then he leaned back in his chair in silence, while Jefferson smoked furiously.

CHAPTER IX.—LENA'S ALARM.

LENA ANSDELL had truly said that she was unwell, and that night she sat near her open window, gazing out at the bright moon, which shone down upon the sea of mist below. Her heart was

sore, and the future full of clouds. Below her, she could hear the murmuring of voices, one of which she recognized by its harsh tones; and more than once she started, as she fancied, at last made sure, that her name was uttered, the sounds ascending to the open window.

So far she knew that she had been weak and ductile, ready to yield to her father's every wish; but as she sat there now, the thoughts were strong upon her whether she could not help her father in his sore need otherwise than by selling herself, as it were, to a man she hated.

A slight rustling close below her window took her attention, just as despair was beginning to resume its sway, and, drawing closer, she stood in the shadow watching, she knew not why, a couple of black figures stealing softly along by the trees, till they reached a spot from whence they could peer into the room below.

A cold, damp perspiration stood out upon the poor girl's forehead; and, as she recalled the alarm of a night or two before, she remained, chilled with terror, as she thought what might be the consequences should the slaves rise against them.

Such things had happened, she knew, and with horrible barbarities perpetrated upon those who held them in bondage. There were only three other white families upon the island, while the slaves were as fifteen or twenty to one.

Had she grown weak and foolish, she asked herself, that the sight of a couple of men should revive such terrors. She could not say; but the horrible dread was there. And now she recalled that, during the past few days, her little acts of kindness towards the women at the village had been received in a distant, half-surlily way, which, coupled with the many brutal acts of oppression exercised by the overseer, and the alarm of the rising, now seemed terribly ominous.

"But papa has always been so kind," she thought, "and—"

She paused; for just then, from outside, a low, husky voice whispered her name twice.

CHAPTER X.—JENNY'S NEWS.

LENA'S lips parted to answer, though she felt that she ought not, when there was a fierce growl, the rush as of heavy bodies through the low bushes, and directly after the sound of an overturned chair; and Jefferson darted out, his voice being directly after heard talking to one of the dogs always kept about the place, before returning to the sitting-room, when Lena heard the window closed, and the shutters drawn across.

What could it mean? Who could want her at such a time?

Troubled more than she could say, she sat at the window for fully half an hour, when her attention was once more taken by a stealthy figure, which came out into the moonlight, and seemed to make signs to her, every one of which was perfectly incomprehensible; and then the figure seemed to plunge into the wood.

She was puzzling herself as to who it could be that had evidently recognized her, when her door was softly opened, and Jenny, the creamy-complexioned girl who had borne the note from Mr.

Ansdell to Jefferson upon the wharf, stepped into the room, shivering with dread, her face drawn, her eyes dilated, and her breath coming in sobs.

"Jenny!" exclaimed Lena, running to her, "what is it?"

The girl tried to speak, and caught at her mistress's dress; but something seemed to choke her, and, with a burst of hysterical sobs, she fell at her feet.

With a quiet, womanly movement, Lena passed her arm round the girl, and tried to soothe her; but by an effort, urged thereto by the dread intelligence she had to convey, Jenny forced back her emotion, and exclaimed, huskily—

"Quick, Miss Lena—downstairs! We must hide."

"Downstairs—hide?" exclaimed Lena, in bewildered tones.

"They are going to burn the place, and kill master and Mr. Jefferson, and then take us away!"

"Absurd—nonsense!" exclaimed Lena, whose heart beat faster. "But you do not say who—who told you this?"

"Old Lily, miss, just now. Soc, that man down the village, is with her, with his wife and baby. You know—the one you gave things to."

"Yes, yes," exclaimed Lena, hurriedly.

"Soc came to the window to try and speak; but Black Crab flew at him, and Mr. Jefferson ran out, and Soc has been torn by the dog, and he dare not stop; but they came round afterwards to the back."

"But it cannot be!" cried Lena, pitifully. "They must have been mistaken."

"Oh, no, miss—no. Soc's wife says the hands are all mad against Mr. Jefferson, and master too, for letting him beat them; and they're going to—to— Oh, Miss Lena—Miss Lena, I daren't tell you; it's too horrible!"

"Here, quick!" exclaimed Lena, rising to the occasion, as the poor girl broke once more into a passion of hysterical weeping.

Catching Jenny by the arm, she half dragged her down to the kitchen, where the slave, his wife and child, and Lily, the black cook, stood shivering in a group.

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CHAPTER XI.—A BRAVE GIRL.



"Is this true, Soc?" asked Lena, quietly.

"Yes, Missy Lena, all true, so help me—"

"Hush!" she exclaimed, checking the man. "Tell me what it all means, and quickly."

"Yes, missy. Boys say, if stop any longer, Massa Jeff'son cut all 'em livers out, and make 'em die, and dey say be hang if dey tears hair any longer, and dey all swear in de woods round a fire, dat dey'll kill him, and cut him heart, and

— Dere, I won't tell 'ee any more."

"Come here," exclaimed Lena, who read but too plainly in the black's shivering features that he spoke the truth. "How is it you are not with them?"

The slave looked at her, then at his wife and child; and then, without a word, he darted towards the speaker, caught her little white hand in his, and held it to his great broad black breast for a moment before he let it go.

The tears started from Lena's eyes, as she saw the poor fellow's meaning; but there was no time for indulgence in emotion.

"Come here!" she said. "Let us go and tell papa."

"No, no, missy; Massa Jeff'son kill him dead if go in dere, and den who take care of Clio and de pic'ninny?"

"What's all this here?" exclaimed Jefferson's grating voice; and all the group started, for he had entered the kitchen unperceived. The woman cowered over her child, and Soc, the great stalwart black, seemed to allow every nerve and muscle to slacken, falling down upon his face before his savage master.

"Here, you get up, you black skunk!" continued Jefferson, as there was no answer; and he kicked the slave fiercely till the poor wretch rose, when he caught him by the throat. "It was you skulking by the window an hour ago, wasn't it? Speak, will you, you brute, or I'll half kill you!"

As he spoke, he half strangled the man, who, spiritless from long ill-usage, would as soon of thought of flying as of offering the least resistance.

"You coward!" exclaimed Lena, indignantly; and in a moment it seemed as if all the girlish softness had departed from her nature, as, with eyes flashing, and nostrils distended, she took a step forward, and,

to the intense amazement of the overseer, struck him smartly with her little clenched fist in the face. "How dare you ill-use that poor creature! It is your brutality that has brought us to this pass. The slaves have risen, and have sworn to have your blood and your master's. Now try and save us, if you can!"

Pale with rage and astonishment, it seemed for a moment as if the overseer would have struck the frail but unflinching figure before him. The last words, though, acted upon him, so that he shrank back, staring from one to the other, his eyes resting last upon Mr. Ansdell, who now came trembling into the apartment where they stood.

"It's false!" he exclaimed, at last, recovering himself. "That black scoundrel has invented it. They daren't do it."

"Look—look, massa—massa!" exclaimed the slave, dancing about in his excitement, as, forgetting his dread, he involuntarily pointed to the witness of his words in a dark red glow, which now showed through the window, and illumined the opposite wall. "Dat's a warehouse, and all um sugar casks burn, and dey're coming on here."

With a cry of rage and dread, Jefferson rushed to the window and threw it open, just as a brighter flash darted up over the trees; and as he saw indeed that it was the old house half-way down the mountain side that had been fired, a loud shout, and the busy hum of many exulting voices, fell upon the ears of those within the room.

Like some savage beast at bay, Jefferson drew a pistol from his pocket, and turned to gaze upon the slave, who crept for an instant behind Lena, but directly after went and stood by his wife and child.

Lena followed, and faced the armed man, who



stared at her as if aghast at her proceedings. She seemed so changed from the gentle, forbearing girl of an hour ago that he could not comprehend it.

But there was no time for other thoughts than those which related to their personal safety, for even

as the overseer stood there the shouts and hubbub increased, every now and then rising to a howl like that of a troop of rejoicing fiends. The red glow grew brighter, keen tongues of ruddy flame darting up above the trees; and a cruel pang or two shot through Lena's breast as she thought of the happy days she had spent in that old home, before it was made a warehouse, and the more pretentious residence built. Then she recalled her last visit there, and the struggle she had stayed; and how devoutly she wished that George Brand and his stout followers were there to help her.

Her musings were interrupted by Mr. Ansdell, who, roused by the imminent danger to the necessity for immediate action, forgot his minor troubles in this greater one, and exclaimed—

"Quick, Lena—your hat and cloak! We must try and get down by the wood path to the bay; we can then cross to Wilton's."

Lena ran out, and returned in a minute—one that had been seized by Mr. Ansdell as an opportunity for arming, the insecure life in a far-distant island making fire-arms to be considered as matters of course.

As for the overseer, he seemed to be completely unnerved, and turned from one to the other in a wretched, helpless way, as if he expected them to make some special effort to save him.

The sight of Lena, though, seemed to rouse him, and, examining his pistols, he held out his hand for one of the rifles Mr. Ansdell had just brought into the room, when a half-suppressed scream from Jenny made all turn to where the frightened girl was pointing towards the window.

A glance showed them, in the faint red glow, the swarthy outlines of a black, who was evidently watching their every movement.

Without pausing to consider the wisdom of the act, Jefferson, with a motion quick as light, raised his rifle and fired, with the effect that, following instantly upon the report, came a wild shriek, and then the rapid, crashing noise of a body rushing through low underwood.

"Not down," said Jefferson, grimly beginning to recharge his rifle.

But to all present it now became evident that the report and the shriek had been heard down by the fire; for there was a dead rush from down the mountain side.

"They'll be here directly!" half shrieked Jefferson. "Here, Ansdell, help fasten this window. They'll be like so many devils broke loose—they'll murder us without mercy!"

"They'll murder *you* without mercy, if they take you!" exclaimed Mr. Ansdell, whose face seemed, in the dire emergency, to lose its aspect of broken manhood and indecision. "The greatest act of kindness you could do to us now would be to escape, and leave us to run the risk."

"No, no—no, no!" said Jefferson, hoarsely. "I won't leave you—I can't be alone! Here, Jenny—quick! The next room—some brandy!"

The girl fetched the decanter, and he drank from it as though the strong spirit had been water; and then he turned to Mr. Ansdell.

"What are we to do?" he said.

"Escape," was the laconic reply. "I dare not face those poor savages, roused as they are now, with you by my side. The road is open towards the bay perhaps yet. Come, Lena."

Without another word, he caught Lena by the arm, threw open the back door, and then stood listening; while, as if loth to be alone, Jefferson would have taken Jenny's hand, only the girl repulsed him, and ran to the side of her mistress, while the slave caught up his little one, and closely followed.

The overseer glanced darkly from one to the other as he saw how he was avoided; but this was no time for resentment, and he followed the others out to where the wood came close up to the back of the house, and then for a minute they stood listening.

They were in the deep shadow cast by the heavy foliage; but the house stood out clearly defined against the reddening sky. There was not a sound to be heard, though—an ominous sign, for it told that, leaving the flames to finish that which they had begun, the slaves were approaching silently to fire the house; and, well used as they were to every intricacy of the dense woods around, it was a hazardous venture to attempt to thread them by night, since even if they avoided meeting with any of the party, they would be rapidly pursued, and probably overtaken before they could reach the bay.

There was the chance, though, that the slaves might not find out that they had forsaken the house for some little time, and that would perhaps enable them to escape; but that hope was dashed to the ground by the recollection to which Mr. Ansdell gave utterance aloud—

"We have left the door open, and they will see that we have gone."

He glanced at Jefferson as he spoke; but, with an oath, the overseer told him to hurry on; and this little advantage would have been denied them but for the heroism of Jenny, who darted back, and they saw her with fear and trembling as she crossed a comparatively light portion of the ground, and ran towards the back of the house.

"Brave girl!" muttered Mr. Ansdell.

He said no more; but, like the rest, stood listening and watching for her return.

The moments seemed hours before there came on the terrible stillness the sharp sound of the closing door; then the girl's light form was seen running across the light, and then, half-confused, she stopped, as if not knowing the direction in which the fugitives awaited her coming.

If the slaves should approach now! They would see her, and follow her to where they were.

Mr. Ansdell shuddered; but nerving himself, he uttered her name as loudly as he dared.

The girl turned, and bounded towards them with a cry of joy.

"Oh, sir," she cried, panting, "I thought you had all gone and left me!"

No other word was spoken; but they all listened for a moment to try and detect some alarm-note. But no, all was still as death: even the customary noises of the forest were hushed—an ominous sign, which told that there were strange footsteps there, stealthy feet, and dark bodies creeping cautiously

through the low undergrowth—so that the dread silence was harder almost to bear than would have been the cries of those in pursuit.

It was as they had suspected: the shot had roused the slaves from their orgie of fire, and while they had stopped listening, the wounded man who had been watching the house dashed in amongst them, staggered for a moment, and then fell heavily upon the earth.

There was no shout raised; but the party, quite a hundred strong, as if moved by the same impulse, spread rapidly out, each man seeking his own way to the house; not by the regular path, but spreading out through plantation and wood, and then creeping forward after the fashion of so many wild beasts about to spring upon their prey.

CHAPTER XII.—FLIGHT FOR LIFE.

THE fugitives had not gone fifty yards through the dense undergrowth, each moment expecting to see an enemy start up in their front to stay their further progress, when, as if rising from all sides of them, came as diabolical a yell as ever issued from human throats. It was the wild triumphant cry of those who had turned at last, after years of cruel oppression; and, speaking as it did of determination to have ample revenge for all past afflictions, it was well calculated to send a chill of horror through the breasts of the trembling women.

"Dat's dem come," said Soc, quietly, speaking with all the calmness of one without fear of danger, to those whose lives were in their hands.

"Pass on!" said Mr. Ansdell, in a hoarse whisper. "It's a chance, but we may get through them."

He took the lead, and, with the boughs rustling and snapping on all sides, they continued their perilous journey.

Twice they stopped short, as the trunk of some tree was magnified into a foe; but they soon found that at present the danger was entirely in their rear, where the shouts grew louder and louder as the party was strengthened.

"What's that? Where did they get guns?" exclaimed Jefferson, as a couple of reports rang out on the still night.

For answer, Mr. Ansdell pointed over the trees in another direction, where the red glow of flames, hitherto unnoticed, could be seen tingeing the sky.

"Why, they've been up to my place," exclaimed Jefferson. "They have burned that too!"

"Dey burn dat fire, massa," exclaimed the thick voice of the black; "and dat's where dey say dey mean eat your heart."

Jefferson made no answer; but those who were nearest could tell that he was shuddering with dread.

The path chosen was one but seldom used, and the rapid tropical vegetation had choked it so as to render it almost impassable. Could they but keep on, though, for another quarter of an hour, they would reach the end of the bay, where some boat or another could be found to convey them, if not to safety, at least to the company of others of their own nation, who would join with them for mutual defence—unless, indeed, they should already have taken the alarm, and fled farther inland.

"They are after us, and coming now fast!" ex-

claimed Jefferson, in horrified accents, as a loud shout in their rear proclaimed some discovery on the part of the enemy.

The overseer was right; for now, in place of the noise, there was once more a dead silence, and another lurid light shot up to tell of the work of destruction being carried on in another direction, the lightly-built, shingle-covered houses flaring up in a rapid way, so that the whole heavens glowed; while below, in the forest path, all was dark, even to blackness.

The ominous silence once more told that the blacks were coming on; and in momentary expectation of hearing their shouts, and being surrounded and dragged to death, or, for those who were with them, worse than death, Mr. Ansdell and the overseer pressed on.

Another hundred yards, and they knew that they would be at the water's edge, though they might have there, perhaps, some distance to go along the sands before they found a boat. But already there was a faint, rustling sound of pursuit behind, and, nerved by the dread engendered by each faint noise, they plunged almost headlong down the sharp, rugged descent, to stand at last upon the smooth sand.

Where they first reached the sandy shore they knew that it would be impossible to find either boat or canoe; so they pressed on in a diagonal direction towards the water, the darkness favouring them in their flight over what was now smooth and level.

There was a pleasant, cool breeze, too, blowing from off the bay, most refreshing after the dense, stifling, dank heat of the lower part of the wood they had traversed—a heat that had more than once nearly overpowered Lena, in spite of her efforts to retain such strength and presence of mind as should aid him who held her arm.

They crossed the sands at a run, and Jefferson dashed into the shallow water, looking here and there as he stopped for one or other of the canoes usually lying there; but as yet not one was visible. Then, with lowered hands, he walked rapidly along, trying to touch the mooring rope which should hold some boat. But no, nothing touched his hand, Mr. Ansdell being as unsuccessful; while moment by moment the horrible thought pressed upon them that they had been forestalled, and that every boat and canoe had been cut adrift.

The slaves were close after them, too, now, and, no matter how they hurried, they must be overtaken. Even if they contrived to hide for the dark hours, they must be hunted down at daybreak; and, with a groan of anguish as he thought of his child's fate, Mr. Ansdell drew his pistols, and cocked them, before they were replaced in his breast.

In spite of all, they hurried on, as if nature prompted to keep on to the last: but their pursuers were now swarming out of the wood which they had themselves so lately left.

"Here, quick—follow me!" exclaimed Jefferson.

And, evidently beside himself with horror, he darted into the water, as if to swim out. The next moment, though, he had seen his folly, and, as if drawn back to Lena's side, he ran on with them.

If the schooner had only stayed but a little longer!

was the thought of all there—a brave captain, a stout crew, and refuge for them all. A short struggle, and they could have reached the wharf. But that was of no avail now; and panting along, their pursuers gained on them fast.

"Escape, dear papa! Run—pray run!" panted Lena, at last—"I can go no farther."

A groan of despair tore from Mr. Ansdell's breast as he passed his arm round the slight waist of his child, and so helped her along for another hundred yards, when she stumbled, and fell to the ground, Jenny throwing herself on her knees at her side, uttering a wild, hoarse cry of fear, as she clung to the recumbent form.

"Here, quick, Soc!" exclaimed Mr. Ansdell.

The black passed the child to his sturdy wife, and in a moment raised Jenny in his arms, as his master caught up Lena, Jefferson having run on; but, like a rat at bay, returning again. And then, without a word, they pressed on once more for thirty or forty yards, when arms were prepared, and they stood ready to sell their lives as dearly as they could.

"A couple of shots each may check them," said Mr. Ansdell. "We can but try. I can go no farther. Are you ready?"

But Jefferson made no reply, for his attention was taken up by the movement of Soc, who had turned seaward, listened for a moment or two, and then exclaimed—

"Boat's coming!"

"Where?" cried Mr. Ansdell; and as soon as he had spoken he heard the splash of oars.

It was a dangerous experiment, since it was telling the blacks exactly where they were; but it seemed their only chance for safety, since the thought had flashed across his mind that the boats might be from one of the plantations across the bay, and he shouted loudly—

"Here, quick—quick! for Heaven's sake! Help!"

He regretted it the next moment, for the thought came now that it might be a party of the slaves who held possession of the boats.

There was a loud yell, too, now, from those who were pursuing them along the sands, as they came rapidly on; but thrice welcome to the ears of those who were so near to a cruel death came the loud, cheery cry off the water, as the splash of oars was heard more plainly—

"All right!"

Without a moment's hesitation, Mr. Ansdell now caught up Lena, and plunged into the water, here shallow, and shelving gradually down. Soc carried Jenny; and, only stopping for a minute, to utter a savage oath or two, as he discharged his rifle and both pistols in the direction of his coming enemies, Jefferson also waded in.

They knew that it was to be a case of moments whether safety or death was to be their portion; and, to Mr. Ansdell's horror, he found that, directly the firing was heard, the splashing of the oars ceased; and he had to cry for help again and again before it was renewed, the party in the boats having taken the alarm.

The welcome sound was once more heard as they waded on, the water now close up to their armpits. They could not see the help, though, yet; but, to

their horror, there were some of the blacks splashing in after them through the water.

"Massa swim to boat," said Soc—"Clio swim too."

And, without a moment's hesitation, the faithful fellow struck off with his burden—poor Jenny!—in the direction of the coming boat, his wife swimming beside him with ease, as she held her little one's head above the water with one hand.

Mr. Ansdell mistrusted his strength; but it was, he knew, their only chance; and, loosing his hold of his rifle, he lowered Lena down into the water, and dashed forward.

Panting, exhausted, burdened with a heavy load, he soon found that he had overtaxed his powers—that he was an old man now, prematurely aged by trouble and a relaxing climate. There was one thing he knew, though, that gave him one hopeful thought, as again and again the strangling water rose above his nostrils: they were beyond the reach of the slaves, and a more merciful death was to be their lot.

He struggled on, though; Lena, who had fainted, lying passive upon the water, as he tried to force his way on. It was years since he had even tried to swim; and now that he was attempting it dressed, burdened with heavy pistols in his breast, no wonder that his every effort failed to keep him afloat. The water, smooth as it was in the land-locked bay, swept over him; the noise of thunder was in his ears; and in the midst of a terrible confusion of intellect, he sank, struggled to the surface, sank again, the water's thunder seeming to roar now, and then all seemed over, when he felt, in a half-dreamy way, that he was seized; and his next recollection was lying weak and prostrate in the bottom of a boat.

CHAPTER XIII.—AT JOHN WILTON'S.

IN a few moments Mr. Ansdell struggled up, to find that they were being rowed across the bay.

"Are all safe?" he gasped.

"Yes; I reckon we're all here," said a too familiar voice. "It was a narrer squeak, though."

"Very narrow," said a voice—"so narrow, Mr. Jefferson, that if there had been another inch, you would have thrashed no more niggers."

"Ah, Wilton, is that you?" said Mr. Ansdell, faintly.

"Yes. We were rowing across, having been alarmed by the reflection. We thought it an accident, and were coming to help. This is terrible work, though. Lay into it, my boys, for Heaven knows what may be wrong when we get back!"

Silence fell upon the occupants of the boat, who could, however, hear plainly the dull, confused murmur of voices upon the shore; while, as they rowed farther and farther out from beneath the land, the devastation of the fire became more visible, three glowing lights still flaming away from amidst the thickly-wooded mountain-side.

There was silence in the boat, but the thoughts of all were busy as they went over the perils to be encountered—Mr. Wilton, the owner of the other plantation, trembling for his own home; for it was only too probable that the rising would be general throughout the island, and he had a wife and daughters at home. Then, too, there was the family

at the corner of the bay, who ought to be warned; and he was going over in his own mind the best way of giving them the alarm, when a hail from another boat proclaimed that the parties in question had seen the fire.

"What's best to be done, then?" exclaimed a voice from the other boat.

"Bring every one of your people, and every grain of powder and ounce of lead, up to our place, and we'll hold out to the last. We may, perhaps, keep them at bay till the *Volage* comes back."

Mr. Ansdell groaned—he could not help it; for he knew that the schooner was not many hours out of sight of land.

There could be no help from there. They must defend themselves as well as they could, and, as a last resource, put to sea in the boats: they might reach another island, though the chances were small indeed. Still, he would rather be in the hands of the Ruler of the sea than in those of the fiends who pursued them—for they were little else, now that they were roused to the state of mania in which everything was forgotten but the one desire to kill.

The fresh comers rowed rapidly away, the boat being visible for some few minutes in the bright glow that seemed reflected from the sky on all sides; then the fugitives were alone, and, in a silence only broken by the dip of oars, the anxious party continued their journey.

"Pull hard!" exclaimed Mr. Wilton to those who were with him; and then he sent a shudder through all who heard him, by saying, "How do we know that there isn't a rising amongst my people at home?"

There was no response for a few moments, and then Mr. Ansdell replied, bitterly—

"Your people have not been driven to it by brutality."

"Neither ought yours to have been," said Mr. Wilton, whose voice sounded laboured, as he dragged at his oar. "I don't want to be hard on a man who's down; but look you here, friend Ansdell—before I'd have suffered my fellows to be served as yours have been, I'd have done the work myself."

"Now, look here!" broke in Jefferson, with a savage snarl—"let's have no more of this. You live nigh to us, but you don't know everything. 'Still tongues make wise heads,' Master Wilton. Jest reckon that."

"Perhaps they do, Mr. Overseer; but, if we didn't know everything across the bay, we did know the game you were playing; and now that you have won your game, much good may it do you."

The boat's head gritted on the sand, as the last words were spoken, when Wilton's son, one of the rowers, dashed off, closely followed by his father, to the house, half expecting to find that there was danger awaiting them; but all proved to be just as they had left it, though the women were agitated, and anxious to know the result of the journey across the water.

A sort of council of war was then held, as to the best plan to be adopted: whether to take to the sea, or try and fortify the house, holding out as best they could against the attack which, they felt sure, would come in a short time.

"First of all, though, some one should go down and see what is going on amongst your people," suggested Mr. Ansdell.

"Ah! to be sure. They must have seen the fires. Who'll go?" said Mr. Wilton.

A volunteer was soon found in the person of Soc, who dashed off at a sharp run, to return in a quarter of an hour with the news that not a soul was in the little village.

"Looks as if somebody else's niggers weren't perfection," sneered Jefferson.

"It's the old tale," said Wilton, sternly. "If you set a light to dry wood, there's no knowing where the flame will end. We must get our place as strong as we can before morning; for by that time there won't be a slave in the island that has not joined in the rising."

It seemed almost an act of madness to think of trying to defend the place against the savage crew who would come on; but there were women here, too, and children; and as, totally ignoring the while the presence of Jefferson, John Wilton helped to barricade door and window, there was a stern reality of purpose to be seen marked in his countenance, which told that, when roused, he would be a very lion to beard in his den.

"Go you, and let the girls give you dry clothing, my little lassies," he said, kindly, to Lena and her maid. "And don't you be scared, even if you hear a little shooting; we'll take care of all of you. Ansdell," he said, as soon as they were alone, "this is going to be a sorry business. We must fight, man—fight to the last—for they'll tear us to pieces if they get the upper hand. We won't talk about who brought it on now; but will that Yankee fight?"

"I don't know—I can't say," was the reply.

And then for a few busy minutes the task of preparation went on, till there was the sound of coming footsteps, when all hastened to the barricaded door, ready to fire, if need were, though they felt pretty sure that they were friendly steps; since, had they been those of enemies, they would have approached with more caution.

CHAPTER XIV.—A DARING ATTEMPT.

"IT'S the Headleys," said Mr. Ansdell, as the figures of five people became visible.

And now these neighbours, who had heretofore been upon only civil terms, seemed to have become, by the common bond of danger that encircled them all, the dearest of friends.

Not that the new arrivals, who were hastily admitted, seemed at all likely to prove pleasant aids in the difficulty now threatening; for there were two women in the party—one of whom, a tall, hard, angular-looking lady, threw herself into a chair, and then, looking round through the dim room, exclaimed, in a harsh, strident voice—

"He would come!"

"And the wisest thing, too, under the circumstances, Mrs. Headley," said Wilton. "You would not have been very safe down below. You know the danger, I suppose?"

"Oh yes, I know," was the reply; "but he would come—come here, I mean, to the island—and leave as pleasant a little home as ever a man owned, to

get into this wild, black, murdering place. Didn't I a'most go down on my knees to him, Sarah, and beg of him not to come?"

"No," said the lady addressed, very shortly—a young, tall, angular lady, who stood gazing towards the barricaded door.

"That's right. Just like you," said the strident-voiced lady. "Take his part in everything. But it was so. I declare to goodness it was; and he would come. And now he'll get us all murdered in our beds—I mean murdered, and that's just what he wants, so as to get rid of me."

"Spose you just keeps your reowing till all this is about over, Mrs. Headley," interposed Jefferson. "I reckon we've 'nuff to do here without that. You can fight a few, for I've seen you; so just try if you can't handle a gun when the trouble comes."

Mrs. Headley did not condescend to answer, but turned away to speak to Wilton, who was, however, now in earnest converse with Mr. Ansdell.

"It must be done, I tell you, and it's the only way I can see. The first thing they will do will be to smash a hole through their bottoms, and that chance will be gone. You must cover as well as you can, if they come up before we have done. Here, Tom—Joe!" he exclaimed.

His two sons stepped forward in an instant.

"Look here, my lads," said the father. "We mean to hold the house as long as we can; but the time may come when we shall want to escape in the boats. So I propose that we swamp them both, and then a lump or two of rock in each will sink them in the shallows, where they may escape notice. When we want them, it will be easy enough to bale them out when we have removed the lumps of stone. Now, then, what do you say: will you come and help?"

"Of course," was the eager reply; when Mr. Wilton turned round to his neighbour with—

"I needn't have asked them, friend Ansdell; they'd go through fire and water to save that daughter of yours. It was Tom who first saw the fire, and roused me up to come and help. But keep a sharp look out, and give us a word or two of warning, if you can. We must be smart, for it will be daylight directly."

"I reckon you'd better not venture out," said Jefferson.

"I reckon we had, sir," said Wilton, sternly. "We're not asking you to risk your valuable carcass, are we? You will be safe enough here, and you can cover our retreat."

"Headley!" exclaimed the harsh, strident voice, "here—go too. Is your gun loaded?"

"My dear," said the planter, mildly, "I'm going to stop and take care of you and Sarah. We are not at home now, my dear; and, besides, you are in danger."

"We shall not want Mr. Headley, ma'am," said Wilton, "only to protect us while we are busy; and if you do take a gun in hand, please mind which are friends and which are foes. Now, my boys," he said to his sons, "leave your guns, and let us be off quick."

"Take the black with you," said Mr. Ansdell. "He will watch, and give you warning of the danger, if it comes before you finish the task."

It was a good thought, and a few hurried words having enlightened Soc upon the duty he was expected to perform, one of the side windows was cautiously opened, and two of the party stood listening for a few moments.

The chirping of crickets, the soft sighing of the wind, and a dull, long, prolonged shuddering moan from some huge frog was all that could be heard; then came a louder sigh from the wind, as if Nature were about to awake from the slumbers of the night. There was a cool freshness in the air, and a crisp, bright look in the sky; but all was dark yet, though morning was near at hand, and at any minute they might expect, not the first faint dawns and the following twilight, but a sudden flash of orange and gold in the east, and then the bright tropic sun leaping up to proclaim it was day.

The water was just visible, dim and mist-wreathed, not fifty paces from where they stood; and all seemed so calm and peaceful, that it was hard to imagine that there was danger so close at hand.

The black slipped out first, and in a moment his swarthy body seemed to be absorbed in the darkness, as he glided away towards the point whence the danger was expected.

Silence still. Nothing to betoken danger; and father and sons were about to step through the window, when there was a short altercation.

"We can do it very well without you!" said the elder lad, stoutly.

"Yes, of course, said the younger. "You stop, father, and cover us."

But the old man sternly thrust them aside, and, stepping out, they followed him closely; and those who watched could just dimly see three figures running down to the water, their footsteps muffled in the sand; and then there was a faint plash or two, and the surface of the bay, where a star or two had been reflected, looked blurred, and the light seemed to dance, and the three men waded out, carrying with them the grapnels of the boats, and forcing them farther out, so as to ensure their not being laid bare at the going down of the tide.

Had those left behind been at their side, they would have seen them, each bearing a huge block of lava-like rock, as much as he could stagger under, till they had waded out to the boats; and then they, having deposited them on the frail planking, returned for others—masses that had been used for keeping the sand from washing up towards the garden of the house. These pieces, placed with the others, it was an easy task, where they all three stood breast high in the calm water, to bear down one side, when the sea rushed in to help, and in a few moments one boat filled and settled softly down.

But the watchers could see no more than the agitation of the water, as they scanned alternately the bay shores and the dark bank that seemed to shut in their vision landward.

CHAPTER XV.—THE ATTACK.

THE moments at such a time might well seem to be drawn out indefinitely, and it was with ever-increasing impatience that the party in the house watched for the return of these, their most

stalwart protectors, when, as if by magic, there was the first faint flush in the sky, and objects around started out into sight: the tall, palm-like trees, the mountain glistening bright and clear, the surface of the bay, over which long ghost-like wreaths of mist seemed to be anxiously flitting; then the half-length figures of Wilton and his two sons forcing down the last boat; and, on the other hand, Soc, the black, running rapidly towards them in a stooping attitude, and behind him some fifty paces, twenty or thirty of the slaves, who now burst forth into a wild and hideous yell.

The yell was answered by a shriek of terror from the house, as it now seemed certain that the three men in the water must be cut off.

But, seeing their danger, they forced down the boat; and then, with the water splashing up around them in a silver-like foam, they made for the sands.

Theirs was the shortest distance to run, but they had these disadvantages: the water shallowed very gradually, and it was fearful work progressing through so dense a medium; then they were quite unarmed; and lastly, they had to make good their retreat through a narrow window, so that, unless those in the house could keep the blacks for a few moments at bay, the fate of all there seemed to be sealed.

"Run for it—quick, boys!" those in the house distinctly heard old Wilton exclaim, as they cleared the water and dashed up the sand, just as Soc made a bound, and literally threw himself through the window, rolling afterwards, panting upon the floor.

The excitement in the house was now terrible, Mrs. Wilton standing in speechless terror with her daughters and Lena, feeling certain that there could be no escape; for the subdued, patient slaves of the day before were now transformed into a set of mad-dened demons. They had evidently secured what spirits there had been in the warehouse, and with every extravagance of gesture, every frantic cry that human throat could utter, they came on.

It was now an even race to the house, and the disadvantage of the water was got over, when, as if dreading that their prey might escape, the blacks began to yell furiously; and so reckless and daring was their onslaught, that those within the house were either unnerved, or else, in the excitement of watching the fleeing men, forgot to fire.

At one and the same moment, then, the Wiltons and their enemies reached the house, when, in those supreme seconds, fraught with peril, a contest ensued between father and sons, each wishing the other to make good his retreat.

The delay was nearly fatal to all, for, with a savage shriek that seemed to bear with it the revenge for years of oppression, the slaves dashed forward.

"Go first, father, for Heaven's sake!" cried Tom Wilton, imploringly.

"Confound you!—do as I tell you! Tom, Joe, get in!" raged the old man, as, with a tremendous blow with his fist, he sent the foremost black staggering back.

At the same moment, though, he received a heavy blow upon one arm from a club, which paralyzed him, and the black who dealt it had raised his weapon to strike again, when, with a bound like

that of a panther, Tom Wilton had him by the throat, and forced him backwards.

The next instant father and sons were struggling hard for life with three of the foremost enemies, others rapidly coming up. Their fate seemed sealed, and a wild wail burst from the women within, while Jefferson stood with presented rifle, yellow himself with dread, and afraid to fire.

As the rapid struggle went on close beneath the window, old Wilton went down, and another black leaped at him. Tom Wilton was nearly overpowered by a couple of assailants, and Joe was thrust back helpless against the window, when—crack! crack!—two rifle-shots rang out, two death-dealing flashes darted from within the house, and a couple of the blacks fell.

Two more shots followed, disabling others; and as the enemy paused for a moment, half-paralyzed at the startling discharges, the opportunity was given to the Wiltons, the old man recovering himself, and reaching the window, through which he was half dragged by Headley and Mr. Ansdell, and half thrust by his sons.

And now once more there was a contention between the sons who should be last, the elder insisting that his brother should go; and again this delay nearly cost the brothers their lives, as the blacks, somewhat recovered from their check, made at them again, when Mrs. Headley snatched the rifle from Jefferson's nerveless hand, passed the barrel through the open window, and fired at the foremost black, the barrel almost touching his glistening body, when he leaped up a full yard, and fell back into the arms of him who was behind.

This diversion had the desired effect, and in another moment the attacking party were shouting and dancing frantically about the front on seeing the last of the Wiltons disappear through the window, which was directly afterwards barricaded by a stout shutter.

"It was a narrow escape, my lads," cried the father, holding out a hand to each; "but we are safe now, I hope, and thank Heaven for it. Mrs. Headley, I've always judged you harshly; but you're a true-hearted woman, and may Heaven bless you for saving my boy's life."

There were tears in Mrs. Headley's eyes, as the father wrung her hands; but she would not show the softness of her nature, and exclaimed—

"I was obliged to fire—he wouldn't!" and she pointed to her husband.

"Why, hadn't I just emptied my barrel?" he exclaimed, in an injured tone.

"There, there—never mind," cried Wilton, smiling; "we have something else to think of, for we shall have a good many barrels to empty, I'm afraid, before we shall be safe from these demons."

"What are they doing now?" exclaimed Mr. Ansdell.

A look sufficed to show that they must have seen the efforts made by the Wiltons with respect to the boats, for about a dozen had rushed down into the water, searching about, and at the end of a minute or two, had dragged both boats high and dry upon the sands, where with every demonstration of rage, they dashed out the thin planking, battering them

with the pieces of rock that had been placed in as ballast.

"There's no escape for us that way," said Mr. Wilton, grimly. "We shall have to fight it out here."



"Could we not escape to-night to the mountains?" said Mr. Ansdell.

"Yes, if we wished it; and be gradually hunted down, one by one," was the response. "No, Mr. Ansdell; we must hold this place to the last, for the women's sake. The worst danger we have to fear is fire; though, even then, there is the cave."

"The cave?" said Mr. Ansdell, inquiringly.

"Yes, the cave which we use for a cellar. It is natural; and if it had not been for that I should have built farther from the water. If we make up our minds to show fight to the last, we can keep those scoundrels at bay for a week; and we must do so, in the hope of either tiring them out, or else being assisted from some quarter or other."

There was no reply to this, for there seemed so faint a possibility of help arriving, that the subject seemed to all present one that was unworthy of discussion.

The boats were no sooner demolished than, collecting together, and talking and gesticulating loudly, the slaves came on with a rush to attack the house, some armed with rough clubs, others with hoes, spades, anything they could turn into a weapon, only three or four seeming to possess fire-arms, and these were discharged at the window as they came on, the bullets splintering the shutter; but no harm resulted to the inmates.

Then began a fierce battery at the door and jealousie shutters; but the wood-work was, fortunately, strong, and for a few minutes resisted all efforts, while the men looked from one to the other as if asking counsel, when Mr. Ansdell spoke—with difficulty, though, making himself heard amidst the din that raged without.

"I am averse to bloodshed," he said; "but we must fire on them."

"Yes," said Wilton, sternly; "it is our only chance. Their blood be upon their own heads!"

For it was indeed time to take action, did they wish to save those in their care. There were a dozen hands at one of the open-barred shutters, through which flashing eyes and rolling opal eyeballs could be seen. The door, too, seemed about to yield, and a crushing sound behind the house told that the attack was being made there as well.

There had been a feeling of unwillingness to shed blood, which had made all present try to hope that, finding the house strongly fastened, the enemy would retire, and grant them a respite; but they owned that they had not known the savage nature that was now aroused in the negroes, infuriated with the thirst for revenge and the drink they had indulged in.

"It is of no avail; but I will try them once," said Mr. Wilton. "They have all my boys with them—they might, perhaps, hear me."

Leaving the room, then, they heard him open one of the upper windows, and bid the poor, deluded creatures, in his loud, firm voice, to give up, and go back to their huts. But his appearance was only the signal for a perfect storm of shrieks and cries; and the name of "Jeff'son—Jeff'son!" was heard, until the window was hurriedly closed, and the listeners in the lower room became aware, in the dim twilight caused by the closed shutters, that Mr. Wilton had returned.

"Shall I try, Wilton?" said Mr. Ansdell, eagerly. "They may hear me."

"Go and try to stop the next hurricane," said Mr. Wilton, bitterly. "You might as well speak to the sea!"



"But you won't listen to them—you won't give me up?" cried Jefferson, pitifully. "They're mad—they'd tear me to pieces!"

"Give you up!" exclaimed Tom Wilton, with a look of contempt. "Do you think we are such curs

as that? There, man, try and use that piece of yours, for we shall want it badly enough!"

As the young man spoke, his eyes lighted upon Lena Ansdell, a glance detected by the Yankee, who scowled at him ferociously, as he read the look of love and reverence aright.

"It is of no use to temporize: we must fight for the sake of those who look to us for protection," said Mr. Wilton. "Is every gun charged? Good! Then let every shot tell."

As he spoke, he opened the door of a side room, and signed to his wife and daughters to enter; but they clung to him so imploringly, that he was on the point of giving way, when Mrs. Headley completely turned the scale in their favour.

"Let them stop, man," she said. "It will encourage us to fight; and they can load for us, I dare say."

It was indeed time for action now; and without another word, Mr. Wilton stepped up to the shutter in greatest danger, and, firing in a slanting direction, two of the blacks fell back.

His two sons followed his example with a similar effect; but they only seemed to increase the rage of those without.

Mr. Ansdell was the next to fire, with Mr. Headley and his wife; their daughter of the gaunt bones and big frame loading for them busily.

Every shot told, but it was not until twenty or thirty had been fired that the rest of the party became aware of the fact that Jefferson was standing looking on, with his discharged piece in his hand.

Upon seeing that he was noticed, he began to reload his rifle, and taking his post at the back window, he prepared to fire should an enemy present himself.

What slaughter they had committed, the occupants of the besieged house could not see, for as fast as an enemy fell, there were a dozen hands to drag him off; but it was evident that they were doing a great deal of execution, for every now and then there came from the grove about a hundred yards away bursts of shrieks and lamentations, which pointed out plainly enough that the women were there.

All at once Mr. Wilton ceased firing, and stood gazing through the opening that had so far served him as a loophole; and in a minute or two his sons, who had just reloaded their rifles, followed his example.

"Have you any powder?" said Mr. Ansdell just then, as he left his station. "Mr. Headley and I are quite out."

"We have a charge each left," was the reply from Tom Wilton; "and that we want to keep. But stop—isn't that your Cato?"

"Yes," said Mr. Ansdell. "I should hardly have thought, though, that he would have joined them."

"They would have murdered him if he had not," was the reply. "Look, there is Jefferson's other black bloodhound. We have him to thank for all this."

Fortunately for the party in the house, the slaves now drew back towards the wood, all but about a dozen, who had stationed themselves to watch that none escaped.

It was a welcome respite, for the heat was now growing intense; the closed windows preventing the sea-breeze from making their position more endurable. They had not tasted food either that morning; and now, waking to the consciousness of how



much they could do to assist, by attending to the wants of those who were defending them, the women brought bread and water to first one and then another.

It fell to Lena's lot to offer the refreshments she held to the younger Wiltons, both of whom brightened up and smiled gratefully, the elder making some remark that brought the colour to her cheek, and a look of pain to her eye, as she turned hurriedly away.

CHAPTER XVI.—A DESERTER.

THE day wore on, with a careful watch ever kept; but though there were several false alarms, there was no fresh attack. There was the constant strain, however, and the knowledge that at any moment the slaves might make a dash down and succeed in making their way in, was always present to every member of the little party. It had been a hard struggle to keep it back, but the women had restrained all outward show of emotion, and patiently attended to those who defended them, but at last the strain during the long inaction became terrible to bear. There was the long night, too, fast coming on, when instead of rest and sleep, they had to expect horrors, the thoughts of which made them shudder; and though none uttered the dread aloud, there was one enemy that troubled all, as they recalled the fate of the houses across the bay.

That fire would be brought to bear, no one entertained a doubt, and the rays sent in through the closed shutters by the declining sun were watched with dread, as they grew more and more horizontal,

streaming like golden arrows from the quiver of death, as they struck against the opposite wall.

They were very silent there; those who were not engaged in watching, sitting and waiting patiently till their turn should come; but there was a saddened, depressed look on each countenance—a hopeless aspect that, while each tried to conceal it, became more and more manifest as the night drew on.

And now it seemed as if the night was advancing in rapid strides; the sun sank lower and lower, till they saw its lower edge begin to dip in the sea, sending along the smooth surface a glowing way of molten gold, which rippled and danced, and grew each moment deeper in its gorgeous tints. Everywhere, too, the redundant tropic foliage assumed a tinge of gold upon its rich green, while the sky, purple almost in the far east, gradually changed from blue to green and opal, till it blushed a rich rose-red in the west.

On the other hand, where the trees cast long, dark shadows, and the evening breeze rippled through the tall cane plantations, all was so calm and tranquil that it seemed almost impossible to realize that savage enemies had been threatening them with death and destruction, and that even now they were in a position of imminent danger. Not a black figure was now to be seen, though there was a feeling upon those who watched that there were fierce eyes still fixed upon them from hiding-places all around.

Here and there, too, where the last rays of the sun fell, there were dark patches and stains, which told a horrible tale of the fatal effect of the firing; and then the sun passed below the horizon, and in a very few minutes it was night.

Hope seemed to die with those last rays of light, and the women cowered together, trembling, as they tried hard to drive back the thoughts that would oppress them—the thoughts of all those horrors of darkness, with their bloodthirsty enemies hovering around, ready at any moment to take advantage of the gloom to make their next attack.

One hour—two hours passed away, with the loud-ticking clock in the same room with them giving notice of the sluggish flight of the minutes, for those two hours were almost a life to some of the watchers.

Still there was no sign of an enemy, not a sound to announce the presence of a single black. At times some were ready to hope that the severe punishment the slaves had met with had frightened them away; but not one of the men entertained any such hope, and in whispers they talked of their future proceedings.

"We must fire what shots we have left," said old Wilton, sturdily, "and then club our guns or fight with the barrels; but stop a moment," he said, as a sudden thought struck him—"Jefferson has hardly fired to-day. What powder has he left?"

"Let's ask him," said Mr. Ansdell.

And then, in a whisper, the overseer's name was called and called again, but there was no response.

"If we only had a light," muttered Wilton, "if but for a moment;" though he knew that to use one, for however short a time, might prove fatal to some one or other of the little company.

"Who saw Mr. Jefferson last?" he said then.

"We all saw him just at sun-down," said one of his sons. "He was standing then by the stair-foot."

The name was called again, a little louder, but still there was no reply; and then the elder son said, softly—

"Let me search the place. I know every niche in the dark. Perhaps he is asleep."

It was a strange sensation that—standing there, in the utter darkness, listening while the young man glided about the large room, touching first one and then another, to ask the name in a subdued whisper. Now he would touch some article of furniture, or strike his hand against the wall; but soon they heard him moving in the next room, then in another and another, till the whole of the lower part of the house had been well gone over, when father and son encountered by the foot of the stairs.

"He must have gone up, Tom," said the elder Wilton. "I'll go with you."

They stopped for a moment to listen and answer in the negative a whispered question from Mr. Ansdell, and then they stepped rapidly upstairs.

"Here is the answer, father!" exclaimed the younger, as a cool breath of air smote upon his cheek.

"What, Tom? Is he there?"

"The back window is open."

"A cowardly scoundrel!" exclaimed the elder, passionately. "He brought this upon us, and now he has left us in the lurch!"

It was but too true; for as soon as the darkness had set in, Jefferson stole gently upstairs, as softly opened the back window, which looked over a large coffee plantation, and then, choosing to run the risk of being tracked by the blacks sooner than stay to encounter the dangers that he felt must befall them that night, he had dropped down, crept into the plantation, and then crawled silently away.

"It was like him," muttered the younger man, "and not his fault that they did not find the open window and take us by surprise. You don't think he would betray us, father?"

"Yes, I do," was the grim response; "but he will not now, for he dare not face them: they would tear him to pieces. No; he has gone to save his precious carcass, for he knows that the whole attention of the blacks will be taken up here, and that if he can reach the other side of the island, he may lie hidden for days."

The window was carefully secured, and then the two men returned below, with the hopes raised by the belief that a few more charges of powder each would be afforded them completely damped.

John Wilton had hardly reached Mr. Ansdell's side, where he was watching by one of the windows, when the latter whispered—

"My eyes are not so good as they were, Wilton. What is that down there by the sand? There, watch carefully, and you will see it pass that star shining in the water, and darken it. It did so just now, by that one to the left."

The old planter leaned his forehead against the bars, and by degrees he made out, at last, a dozen stealthy figures crawling along close to the water's edge, as if they were trying to get round to the back.

He raised his gun, took aim, and then paused; took aim again, and again paused.

Should he do it or no? It would be one enemy

the less, and would serve to show the foe that they were watchful.

He hesitated no longer, but took careful aim, and as soon as he felt sure that he had well covered the shadowy form that was nearest, he fired.

CHAPTER XVII.—THREE SHOTS.

AS the loud, smart report of the rifle rang out, there arose a horrible shriek—one which seemed to curdle the very blood of those who listened. Then there was a rush of feet, in dull, soft-sounding footsteps, and, once more, all was silent as the grave.

"That has, perhaps, warded off some scheme of theirs for the present," said old Wilton, as his hand mechanically took hold of his flask.

But the next moment he replaced it, with a sigh, and stood, holding the piece with both hands on the muzzle, while upon them he rested his chin.

Another hour passed away, and then the watchful eyes of the younger of the brothers detected a similar advance towards the other side, when another piece fired its last shot, and the enemy was put to flight.

And now a whispered proposition arose from Headley, the owner of the plantation at the head of the bay, that now, under cover of the darkness, they should make good their retreat to the other side of the island.

"We might hide from them there for days," he said.

"No!" was Wilton's decisive answer. "The chances are ten to one against our getting off clear, for they are all on the look-out, you may depend. We are under cover here, and have a little provision; out in the open we shall be at their mercy."

"But this watching in the dark is such killing work," protested Headley.

"For them—so far," was the grim reply. "No, neighbour, we must fight it out here, and—look-out! Who has a gun—loaded?"

The sudden exclamation was drawn from Wilton by a sudden flash, seen at some distance amongst the trees; and he knew, now, well enough that the danger he had so long foreseen was about to put them to the test.

"Tom, Joe, my lads, it's a hard task to set you to," said their father; "they will try to fire us by throwing brands on the roof. You two must get up there, ready to dash them off. They have a gun or two, but I don't think you need fear them, and that is the only way they could reach you."

For the peril was now imminent, indeed; the flash of one light being rapidly multiplied, as brand after brand of some dry, inflammable wood was ignited; and, in the distance, as the dancing lights fell upon the black figures running here and there amongst the trees, the effect was almost demoniacal.

A rush was evidently intended; and a shiver ran through more than one frame, as the fullness of the appalling danger began to be perceived. For the house was principally of wood, and from the dryness of the climate, that wood was light and ready to catch at once, when it seemed that nothing could save the building and those within it from destruction.

The great danger, though, was to be apprehended

from the roof, upon whose low pitch any brand, if thrown, would lodge; and the covering being light slabs or shingles split from pine, unless the young men who had boldly climbed to their places could succeed in hurling back the fiery missiles, the fate of all within the place was sealed.

"Who has a shot left?" said Wilton, to whom all seemed to look as leader.

Three responded, namely, Mr. Ansdell, Headley, and his wife.

"I don't want to assume too much, friends," said the old man quietly; "but I should be glad to have those three rifles handed to me one after the other."

Without a moment's hesitation Mr. Ansdell passed his gun into the other's hands, and then stood watching the coming on of the blacks, who, now casting off all concealment, came rushing on firebrand in hand, to the number of thirty or so, the fire they carried flashing and blazing fiercely in the air as they ran, while the bright glow was cast behind on dozens of eager black faces.

As if by pre-arrangement, they all stopped at about thirty paces from the house, when, leaping forward, one man ran on, whirled his firebrand round his head, and was in the act of throwing it, when—

Crack!

The nerve had departed from that arm, and in a moment the blazing wood fell to the ground, lighting up the ghastly, grinning features of him who had held it the moment before, as he fell upon one knee and then rolled over, dead.

Nothing dismayed, another man dashed on, and with a more rapid movement he swung his torch round; but before it could leave his hand—

Crack!

The fatal rifle-shot rang out, and the black turned half round to flee, but fell the next moment upon his firebrand, and extinguished it on the instant.

Again a man leaped out, yelling furiously, as if to intimidate those he strove to harm. He, too, whirled his torch around his head, lighting up his hideously fierce aspect, his grinning teeth, rolling eyes, and distorted face; for it was evident that they had all been preparing themselves for the onslaught with the rum they had secured from the warehouse.

It was an appalling sight; and this time John Wilton's hand trembled as he took aim. It was the last shot, too; and he had hoped that the others would have had the effect of checking the attack, instead of, as it seemed, inciting the enemy to fresh attempts.

The torch was in full blaze now, and the occupants of the doomed house could plainly hear the fluttering noise of the flame as it was flashed about to make it a more dangerous missile; but again, before it could be hurled, the deadly rifle poured forth its contents, and, as if dashed down, the black fell upon the instant, still holding tightly to his torch, which burned upon the ground sufficiently brightly to reveal to those around the writhings of his body, the horrible contortions of his face, before he lay immovable.

"Heaven help and protect my poor boys!" moaned John Wilton then, as, with a savage shout, the whole party of blacks now dashed forward, the

flames playing upon their fierce faces, and each torch making its own peculiar fluttering roar.

The end seemed now to be at hand, for the last grain of powder had been fired, and no attempt had been made by the besieged to withstand the attack outside.

Had the slaves calmly applied their torches in one or two places, and been supported by others to beat down resistance, the house must have been in a few minutes blazing furiously. As it was, though, the lesson taught by the three fatal shots fired by John Wilton had had its effect; and to a man the attacking party contented itself with hurling the blazing wood they carried against the shutters or upon the roof, from which, with a celerity that was almost marvellous, the torches were thrown back upon the sand.

Each man, as he hurled his brand, darted back, so that the whole attack did not last above a minute, at the end of which time the result was that a torch was burning feebly here, another there, half extinguished upon the sand; while as to the house, save a little charring here and there, it was intact.

By slow degrees, first one and then another brand became extinct to the last spark; and then once more fell upon the scene of what a few minutes before was all light, life, and glancing figures, a dead silence that was almost appalling to the women, though to the men it came like a reprieve, for they knew that for some little while they would be free from attack.

The next minute the two Wiltons climbed down from the roof, back through one of the upper windows, and retook their places in the lower room.

"It was well done, lads," said the elder. "Could you see any fire further on in the wood?"

"Not a spark."

"Then they'll give us a rest for the remainder of the night."

"Unless they go and set fire to Headley's place," said one of the sons.

"It won't be well for them if they do," said Mrs. Headley, in her harsh, coarse tones. "There's powder enough to blow half of them away."

There was a sound heard at that moment as of a hand brought sharply down upon a thigh.

"And we never to think of that!" exclaimed Headley. "So there is: two big canisters in the big cupboard, where we put it when that Harris brought it across to us in the schooner's boat."

"How much is there?" exclaimed the elder Wilton, hoarse with excitement.

"A good dozen pounds," was the reply; "but there is no getting at it."

"We *must* have it," said old Wilton, sturdily. "It must be got, or some of us will die in the attempt."

CHAPTER XVIII.—TWO BRAVE LADS.

IT was agreed on all hands that it would be absolute madness to attempt to go through the wood or round by the bay to the house in search of the powder. It was also now too near morning for the attempt to be made; for the night had slowly worn on in the midst of the excitement, and there was now a possibility that, after their severe reverses,

and the failure of their attempt to burn the house, the negroes would hold aloof till the morning, perhaps till the next night; and, to some extent, this proved to be the case, for another hour glided by, and then, as all was still peaceful without, old Wilton said he should advise all who were not on the watch to try and sleep.

But sleep was not to be the welcome guest of any that night. And when at last the morning broke, it was to creep sluggishly in, and illumine face after face, ghastly and pallid with the horrors of the sleepless night.

It seemed almost a mockery to their misery for the sun to rise so gloriously and bright—for Nature to look so calmly serene and beautiful. There were the tiny waves of the beautiful land-locked bay, glistening like a sea of opal; the tall palms rose, column-like, to spread their plummy fronds against the clear, deep blue sky; the green canes waved, and bright-hued birds flitted from bush to bush, whistling and screaming. All was bright and beautiful; but man made the Eden-like island for the time being a perfect hell.

There was a ray of hope, though, in the breasts of the defenders of the house. They had beaten off the attacking party, and foiled their attempt to fire the place. They must be disheartened by their failure—perhaps suffering from the effects of a drunken orgie. Certainly, the defenders were without a grain of powder; but the enemy were ignorant of that fact, and their last attack had been repulsed most satisfactorily. They might perhaps hesitate to attack again; and possibly, by some daring plan, the powder might be obtained from Headley's house.

The day wore slowly away, without alarm—there was not so much as an inimical face seen. The island might have been deserted, for the quiet that reigned on their side; but they could not but look on the silence as ominous.

They looked out to sea, hour after hour, from the upper windows, in the hope that by some chance a vessel might come in sight; but their search was in vain; and once more evening drew nigh, with the darkness of another terrible night threatening, during which night it was an understood thing that one of the Wiltons was to undertake the dangerous mission of trying to fetch away the powder from the house at the head of the bay.

Night at last, bringing with it both silence and darkness the most profound; and it was with a shudder of horror that the inmates of the house prepared for what seemed now inevitable death. In a quiet, simple way Mr. Wilton asked all present to join him in prayer; and soon his earnest, heartfelt words were breaking the silence, as he put up his appeal for help in this sore strait.

Then, once more, as his last word died away, there fell that terrible silence which closed all in, like some fearful, almost palpable, mist. Now and again there was a half-suppressed sob from some woman, and a few muttered words of comfort. But soon these ceased, and for quite an hour there was the awful stillness that seemed to presage the coming of some storm.

Suddenly all present started as, in a whisper that

at that time seemed painfully loud, Tom Wilton said—

"I think I'll venture now, father."

"No—no, Tom! Don't risk it!" exclaimed Mrs. Wilton.

"Hush!" said her husband. "Why should you stay him, when it is to save, perhaps, the lives of all of us?"

There was a low sob or two, and Sarah Headley softly crept to where the young man was standing, held out her hand, till, in the darkness, she caught hold of his; and then, pressing it between both of hers, she whispered—

"Say one kind word to me before you go, Tom Wilton."

The young man started.

"What can I say?" he replied, gently. "But there, I must go. Help take care of all here—I may never come back!"

The tall, masculine woman shivered, as the young man's hand was withdrawn, and sinking upon the floor, quite in a heap, she covered her face with her hands, and wept; for there was none there to see the suffering that shook her frame.

She would have wept more bitterly, and those tears would have been mingled with others that told of hot, burning jealousy, could she have seen that Tom Wilton had made his way to where stood his mother and sister, to whom he whispered a few words of hope and encouragement, before finding where Lena Ansdell was seated. The next moment he was by her side.

"I have come to say good-bye, Miss Ansdell," he whispered.

And then, as if the words but lately uttered in his ear had impressed him so that he was bound to speak them again, he repeated poor, plain, coarse Sarah Headley's appeal—

"Try and say one kind word to me before I go; I may never return."

Lena was too much startled and agitated—too much taken by surprise, to speak for a few moments. She knew that she ought to say a few kind, gentle words to the brave fellow who was about to risk his life for their sake; but this manifestation of a warmer feeling than interest troubled her so that her reply was confused and unintelligible. The next moment she felt a pair of lips pressed upon her hand, and then she was trembling and alone.

"I am afraid it is too much of a risk," was the next she heard, and the voice was her father's. "How shall you go? Through the wood?"

"No, I shall swim," was the laconic reply.

There was no more said; and, in a few moments, a faint rustling noise, followed by a dull thud, told that the young man had lowered himself from one of the upper windows, and had commenced his perilous journey.

Again the faint rustling for an instant, and then the dead silence once more; while those at the windows watched anxiously the surface of the bay, to see if they could make out any sign of disturbance.

Twice a star-gleam seemed to be blurred, but they could not be sure, the surface was so cloudy and mist-hung. There was not even the faintest splash or ripple to give them warning that their mes-

senger in search of hope was swimming away; "but," as Mr. Wilton said, "it was a good sign, for their enemies would not know of the attempt."

They knew how the time went; for, in spite of its startling noise, as each hour rolled by, they had not the heart to stop the little time-piece upon the wall. And now they counted one, two, three, four hours of this awful suspense, without a sign of the return of Tom Wilton, or of the slaves being alarmed.

Two or three times over a faint sound from the wood or from the plantation on the left made every heart leap, for it seemed like a signal for a fresh attack. But the night wore on, still in silence; and, in despair, all saw the day break with the result that they had yet, perhaps, a few hours' respite; but there was no powder, and he who had so boldly taken upon himself the task of obtaining it had not yet returned.

Evening again, after a day of heat, and thirst, and misery, such as the sufferers would at another time have believed themselves unable to support; but one had unselfishly tried to comfort another, as the hours rolled sluggishly by.

Old Wilton was watching, with weary, aching eyes, the wood, the plantation, and the surface of the bay, when his second son touched him on the shoulder.

"I shall go and try my luck, father, as soon as it is dark."

Old Wilton shook his head, sadly.

"I will not venture too far," said his son; "and, if I find it doubtful, I will return. Tom will turn up again some time or other."

The father merely shook his head again; and, without announcing his intentions, about ten o'clock the young man glided out by the same way as his brother had taken his departure, and once more came the hours of watchfulness.

This time, though, the night was not passed without incident; for about an hour before dawn there was a faintly-heard signal, and, upon the upper window being opened, there was the sound of one climbing up, and a few minutes after all stood together in the lower room.

"What news? Have you the powder?" exclaimed old Wilton.

"No!" was the whispered answer. "I could never get near."

"But did you see anything of Joe?"

"Of Joe! What do you mean? Where is he, then? Not—"

"Yes—yes. He has gone in search of you!"

The young man groaned.

"He will never get back. I have had the narrowest of escapes myself. It was easy enough to swim down to the head; but the stream gets so strong, you cannot face it back. I had to lie in the cane-brake all day, for they are in the house, and there is no chance of getting near; and though we cannot see them, they are all lying in wait, as watchful as so many cats, and they chased me half across the island, only I doubled back."

"But we heard nothing."

"No, they are as silent as can be, and you don't know there's any danger near till you come upon one of them hidden amongst the canes. But I must go and see if I can't warn poor Joe."

"No—no!" exclaimed his mother. "It would be madness. Stay and protect us, Tom. I cannot lose you both."

Another weary night; another weary day, and night again, with no change—no return of the younger brother. The elder had told them of how he had swum out to be beyond hearing, and then made his way towards the head of the bay; but his words were ominous, when he told of the watchfulness of the blacks, who, apparently tired of risking their lives by direct attack, were, in ignorance of the want of ammunition, waiting either to starve the whites out, or else planning some scheme by which they could take them by surprise.

"Do you think Joe would be taken?" said the father, at last, to his son.

"No, I fancy he would take to the woods; and Joe is as clever that way as the blacks themselves. I wouldn't be down-hearted: he may turn up yet. Hark! What's that?"

CHAPTER XIX.—AMIDST THE FLAMES.

TOM WILTON'S exclamation was caused by a sudden glare of light at one end of the house, and on darting to a window which gave him a view of the part in question, he was in time to see a swarthy figure creeping rapidly away, and he knew that they had been taken by surprise.

For while they had been, perhaps from utter weariness, somewhat lax in their vigilance, the blacks had cunningly crept up, one at a time, and laid light combustible cane-leaves and stems against the house-end, till, deeming it enough, one of the boldest had undertaken, and most successfully, to fire the heap; and, as Tom Wilton uttered his alarm, the flames darted up sharply, with a wild crackling roar, and simultaneously there arose a yell of triumph from all around, where, dimly seen against the dark bank formed by the reflection against the gloom, were numberless leaping and dancing figures, running about wild with excitement.

Without a moment's hesitation, father and son dashed open the window, and leaping out, began to scatter the light flaming material, amidst the yells of the blacks, who, however, never came a step nearer.

The effort, though, was vain; for the night breeze blowing briskly, the flames were fanned till they roared, and the light wood-work of the house caught directly, the flames running up it to the roof, which began to blaze in a way that showed how useless would be any effort to save the place.

For a few moments the two men stood silent and as if stricken helpless, their hands scorched, their hair singed, and despair at their hearts; for, amidst the roaring of the cruel flames, and the yelling of the slaves, who shrieked with delight at the success of their ruse, now arose the wailing of the women, as the smoke began to roll slowly into the room where they were assembled.

Then with a hoarse cry of bitter rage and despair, John Wilton turned towards the howling fiends in his front, shook his fist at them in his impotent rage, and the next moment, unarmed as he was, he would have rushed upon them.

His son, though, was aware of his purpose, and

catching him in his arms, for a few moments the two men struggled together, the blacks yelling more furiously than ever.

"For the sake of them inside, father," cried Tom Wilton, as he panted with his efforts to restrain the elder, whose muscles were hardened by a life of toil, till they were like so much iron.

The words were talismanic, and the next moment, having to plunge through flame and smoke to reach it, father and son leaped through the window once more, and stood amidst the dense choking vapour in one of the outer rooms.

Wilton's house was strongly though roughly built; the father had come out without a penny to retrieve his fortunes, and for long enough he had cultivated his own plantation, with the help of his sons, till, by degrees, fortune smiled on him, and he did as the others upon the little island—obtained slave aid. Then the hut he had lived in was exchanged for his present house—a square frame-built house, which, with the help of his sons, he had enclosed upon a rocky ridge close to the sandy shore. It had been the toil of years, the building of that house, with the different additions that had been made, one and all of wood; but it now seemed as though its destruction was to be the work of an hour.

Tom Wilton's first act was to rush upstairs and close the door of the room whose end was on fire, while his father did the same by the lower room. This would keep out the stifling smoke a little, but already it was creeping fast towards the centre of the house; and in addition to the roar of the flames and the mad yelling of the blacks, there now came that loud, spluttering, crackling noise of the burning wood, as plank after plank, timber after timber, rapidly caught fire, the sparks and burning fragments streaming away overhead into the darkness like a storm of golden snow.

A glance or two from the windows showed that there was no escape; for the blacks, emboldened once more by success, were coming nearer and brandishing their weapons, as they surrounded the place, ready to drive back any of the hapless ones who might try to make an escape from the burning pile.

The darkness around seemed to be one huge, black dome, illumined by the rushing flames, which each moment leaped up brighter and brighter, till—if imagination could paint a hell—there it was, with the lurid red light, the roaring flames, the dancing sparks, and the armed and naked black figures rushing here and there like fiends, waiting to torture those who were within the burning house. The yells and shrieks were sufficient to startle the stoutest heart from its equanimity; but those two men, father and son, toiled on.

The question seemed to be revolving itself as to how long could they exist in this stifling vapour, crawling in through every crevice; the opening, though, of a window gave them a supply of air, and then the back-room was sought, it being farthest from the angle that had been fired, and after that they had a large kitchen beyond, which would afford them a few minutes' respite from the merciless flames.

As for the windows, there was no need to watch

by them now; for though the slaves had closed in, they still kept at some distance from the house, whose burning they rejoiced over.

Up one slope of the roof the flames now rushed, licking up, as it were, with their forked tongues, the light shingles, which crackled and flared away like squares of stout paper; and now there was a very vortex of ruddy gold and orange flame around one chimney, the blaze seeming to have obtained the mastery over the smoke, which rolled away in faint wreaths of vapour. Across the bay, too, now in a ruddy stain, which spread like a stream of blood upon the shimmering waters, the fire shone brightly; tall cocoa palms stood up like columns of gold; while round and round, and ever uttering strange cries, the scared birds, attracted by the novel light, flitted and flitted, until, overpowered by the potent gas that arose from the burning pile, they fell headlong, stupefied, to their death.

Louder and louder each moment the rush of the flames, and their peculiar fluttering noise, as they leaped, and played, and licked at each rafter and beam, as if tasting and tormenting the stout wood, which anon seemed to curl, and curve, and bend, here and there, with agony, before it became an incandescent mass of charcoal.

The inner portion of the house was now blazing furiously at one end; and the slaves yelled with triumph as they gazed at the glowing interior, through brightly-illuminated windows, upon the immolation of the household gods.

But still there was no shriek for mercy—no appeal for aid: there was but the wild crackle and roar of the furnace, as the flames grew each moment more fierce, and seemed to rejoice in purple, in blue, in scarlet, and orange, in every brilliant tint, fanned as they were by the sea-breeze; and now and then, too, a rafter fell with a crash, to send up, careering as in a whirlwind, a spiral of golden sparks, to join those ever rushing over the waving canes.

Sometimes, in their excitement, a black or two would rush in and hurl a club, or a rough stave of some hogshead, into the flames, running back then to squat down watchfully, ready to spring at either of the victims who should try to escape; while when once the flames, darting into the room at the back, displayed for a moment a dark, moving figure or two, the fiendish joy of the slaves was loud and exultant, as they danced and shouted, and beat together the rough weapons they held.

Several times over they made a general rush to the front or back, as if anticipating that the inmates were about to make an effort to escape; but no attempt was made, and, in a sort of triumphant dance they lessened the radius of the cordon drawn round the burning building, till, warned by the rushing flames to come no nearer, as now in rapid leaps the fire spread on, room after room catching, till the whole place was in a blaze, which, like the fires of a few nights before, lit up the heavens with a glow that was visible for miles.

CHAPTER XX.—PUTTING ABOUT.

THOSE were supreme moments of peril for the occupants of the boats of the *Volage*, as the schooner glided down beneath the waves. For the

first few moments, as the stern rose, the painter of the foremost boat was tightened, and her bows lifted, so that for awhile it was in imminent danger of being swamped; but, in another minute, as the schooner began to sink, the painter's tension was at a more acute angle with the water, then it was horizontal, then the stress was downward, and lastly, to the horror of the crew, the bows grew lower, and as the schooner plunged down towards the chasm opening to receive her, the boats made a rush forward, and the men rose to leap overboard and swim for their lives, when, with a shout to them to stand aside, Harris plunged his way over them, jack-knife in hand, seized the rope, and, with one tremendous cut, divided the strands.

"Starn all, you lubbers!" he shouted.

"Quick, my lads—quick! every oar out, and stern all!" cried Brand.

Fortunately, a couple of oars were already out in each boat, and these were frantically plied by two men to each; others rapidly followed, and though no way seemed to be given in a backward direction to the boat, her progress down the watery slope was for a few moments checked, while they hung, as it were, upon the very edge of a fearful whirlpool—a dreadful vortex, which sucked at the boats, and formed in fierce eddies and pools, each of which seemed to be fighting for its share of loose corks and deck gear, which kept disappearing and then leaping out again to the surface, as if endued with sentient feeling, and fighting against the deadly embraces of the vortex that tried to suck them down into the awful depths below.

Twice over it seemed as if their last hour had come, as the boats were sucked nearer and nearer to the agitated pool where the schooner had gone down.

The failure of an oar would have done it, but in the horror of their situation, just at the last moment, as they were sweeping down into what looked to be a well carved out of the water, a mighty effort, made by all the men in unison, literally wrenched the boat aside, and at this instant the men in the other boat, rowing hard, began to make their strength felt upon the line which attached the boats together.

Another drag made the boat seem stationary for a few moments; another, with the towing of the second boat, moved her; and now, giving way with all their might, the men literally dragged themselves back from the horrible death that had so nearly been their lot, and at the end of five minutes their boats rowed softly on the swell, as they lay there in the midst of the ocean, with only a spar here, and a cask or grating there, to show where the gay little *Volage* had so lately glided over the waves.

For a few minutes not a word was spoken: so great had been the shock, that the men sat wiping their dripping foreheads, each face wearing still something of the horrified expression which it had assumed on the near approach of death.

Then they all started, and directly after a broad grin overspread their features, as the incongruous Harris burst forth with—

"I reckon, as old Caterpillar would say, that that was uncommon nigh. Bit of advice: allus have a

haxe in the bows of your boat. I reckon that there other warn't bad advice neither—starn all."

Nothing more was said then, however, for the men caught sight of the dejected face of their captain as he knelt in the bows gazing at the spot where his little vessel had gone down.

One of the most discontented began to mutter something, but he was checked by Harris, who, in a hoarse whisper, told him to "Stow that! Didn't he see as the skipper was takin' on about his wessel?"

But George Brand's thoughts were not only with the sunken vessel, for he was once more going over in his own mind the circumstances in connection with her loss; and, though he could not blame himself for his precipitate departure, it was all plain enough now, that he had been playing into his rival's hands.

What, then, was to be done?

That was a question difficult to answer at a time when he had no one with whom he could take counsel.

Go back, his heart said, and face the scoundrel at whose instigation the ship had been scuttled.

But how could he prove that?

He knew that there was no proof. Still, he was determined upon facing Jefferson; and he was not without hope that some means of discovering the men who had been his tools might turn up.

Then his thoughts turned upon their position. There was land at no very great distance to the west: one or two small islands that they could reach. The place of their departure was four times as far, and he foresaw that there might be some difficulty amongst the men.

He was quite right, for as soon as he gave his orders for putting the boats' heads about, Johnson immediately spoke up—

"That aint the way we ought to go, cap'en."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed George, hastily.

"That's going back four times as far as we ought to go. Let's make for Wayley's Key."

"Ah, let's make for Wayley's Key!" exclaimed several in the other boat.

"You seem to forget, my lads, that I'm captain still, even if the schooner has gone down. I say that we will return to Plantation Island; so now, out with your oars, and, after a bit, we'll rig up a sail or two. You, Richard Lee, take command of that boat till I put Harris aboard. Harris, see what you can do in the shape of a lug sail."

"Ay, ay, sir," was the answer from both the men addressed.

But Johnson and the others in the boat pulled in their oars, and refused, point blank, to go on.

"Bit of advice for you, my lads," said Harris—"out with your oars, and pull on."

"Bit of advice for you in that boat," shouted Johnson back again—"pitch that canting old humbug overboard, and follow us."

He stopped short, for his old adversary, Richard Lee, had suddenly seized him by the throat and waist, and, by sheer strength, sent him back over the boat's gunwale.

"Will you do your duty, or am I to pitch you overboard?" exclaimed Lee, fiercely.

"Will you see one who speaks for your good

treated like this?" shouted Johnson, appealing to those around, when half the men rose, murmuring, attacked Richard Lee in turn, and, overpowered by numbers, he was, after a gallant struggle, during which the boat swayed from side to side, till she was in danger of swamping, forced over the side, when he disappeared, half stunned by a blow he had received.

The next minute, though, he was dragged on board of the skipper's boat, where George stood, pale with rage and mortification at being withstood by his own men at such a time, when the anxiety to get back to the island was almost more than he could bear.

"Never mind, cap'en," said Harris, aloud. "Here's my advice—leave 'em alone, and they'll soon be glad enough to foller us."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Brand, who snatched hopefully at the old sailor's words.

"Oh, nothin' much, cap'en—only they've got plenty of grub, but we've got all the water."

The night came on dark, but clear and starlight; the watch was arranged, and those who were unoccupied lay down amidst the thwarts, glad to sleep off the fatigue of the last hours of heavy labour. For there seemed to be nothing to fear; there was a long, tedious boat-journey before them; but the weather was settled and fine; it was not the season for hurricane or storm. All they had, then, to do was to take their spell at the oars, their sail would do the rest.

Sailors are not only proverbially, but really a very easy-going class of men—familiarity with danger has bred in them contempt; and as soon as some great danger is at an end, they are ready to sleep or to feast, troubling themselves but little respecting the future.

Washing at Home made Pleasant and Profitable.

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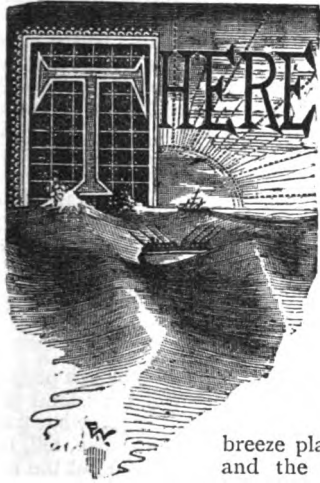
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A Black Story.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "FAR WEST."

CHAPTER XXI.—A NEAR TACK.



WAS little else to be heard at the end of an hour, as George Brand half sat, half lay back by the side of old Harris, who had hold of the tiller, but the heavy breathing of the sleepers, who, aware that it was the turn of some one else to watch, were quite satisfied to leave the task to them. The

breeze played well in the sail, and the little boat leaped over wave after wave as the water foamed under the bows,

a glance or two at this or that star affording the means of steering sufficiently correct for the night.

Very little was said, for George Brand was deep in thought; but from time to time the old sailor turned his head, and gave a running commentary upon the proceedings of the other boat.

"If you'll take a bit of advice, sir, you'll just shove your toe a little nigher to Dick Lee's ribs, so as to let him have it on the shortest notice. Don't be afraid when you do give it him, for he's a mighty strong sleeper; he's like that Irish chap, he pays attention to it. But I'd draw back smart afterwards, 'cause he might hit out savage."

Then there was a short pause.

"They're trying it on now, sir, on the quiet. They're running a bit nigher to the wind, and you'll see every time they tack if they don't reach on a bit, till they've got it so as they can lay us aboard whenever they like."

As the time wore on, it seemed to be precisely as the old sailor had predicted; for there was constantly to be seen the tall, white, ghostly sails of the boat looming nearer and nearer, like some pursuing spectre.

Then it seemed to fade away into the far distance, and, in spite of his anxiety, the wakefulness of the past nights had to be accounted for, and nature pressed heavily upon the young captain's eyelids.

He rose, shook himself, bathed his eyes with water, plunged into conversation with the old sailor, and then listened to his remarks upon the boat; but all was of no avail. In a moment he was back at Plantation Island, trying to rescue Lena Ansdell from some peril. Then he was struggling with Jefferson, who had tried to bear her away again: always something startling; and then, in a terrified, gasping way, he would be sitting up again, listening to the mut-

tered "burr—burr—burr" of old Harris's conversation.

"I wouldn't lay my neck back upon the gunnel, sir, if I was you. It never agrees with me. See there, now, how they're a-reaching over. They're getting the better of us now, and no mistake!"

Lena again, and in trouble, and the schooner sailing back into the bay to her rescue from the over-seer. They were to be married that day, and the schooner would not sail on fast enough to stop the wedding, on account of that hole in her bows. Yes, there seemed to be a great hole, which kept growing larger and larger. He could hear the water rushing in faster and faster, so that it must swamp them; and Jefferson would carry her off in triumph.

"That's a near tack, that is, sir."

Awake! back again to the present, with the boat only some fifty yards away, and just dimly seen as she reached off into the obscurity. Farther away—farther still each moment, fading away even as did the night scene and the dimly descried sleeping figures—fading away, that boat was, into the schooner once more, sailing on and on, past banks green with glorious vegetation and bright with clustering flowers. Lena was by his side now, and there was nothing to fear; only that snake, which swayed about from the great tree that overhung the bank, brushed the schooner's sails, and seemed ready to fall upon them. That snake must be dangerous, for it had so strange a look; its eyes were such as he had seen before; and that cruel mouth—yes, that was Jefferson's, and it was about to strike. But he could not move, he could not stir, though the monster's icy-cold breath was upon his face. Nearer—nearer—nearer, and he could not cry out; he could not even strike at it. And now it was speaking to him quite plainly, this hideous swaying beast, which kept up with the schooner as she swept along with flowing sail, and the water foaming under her bows. Yes, it was speaking plainly enough; and yet, how could that be? It must be Jefferson, and yet—

"I'd just give Dick Lee your toe now, sir."

Awake! and— Yes, what nonsense! He did not think he had been asleep, and yet he must have been.

So he thought; but he did not move, and Harris repeated his whisper.

"You're a bit overcome, sir; but rouse up now, and give Dick Lee your toe. Tell him, as soon as he's awake, to rouse up the others, quiet like. My advice is, as we give these chaps a sharp rap on the knuckles, as shall stop 'em from trying it on again."

"Do you think they mean it now?" said Brand, in the same low tone.

"This tack or next, sir; but rouse up Dick Lee."

Cautiously leaning forward, Brand woke up Lee and the rest of the men, telling them to be prepared with their oars as weapons to keep off the other boat's crew; but not to move—not to show signs of preparation until the others were close aboard.

This task done, Brand returned quietly to the stern, where, tiller in one hand, the sheet of the sail in the other, the old sailor sat, as calm as if there was no exciting attack about to be made.

"I shall let 'em come close up, and then throw

her off quite sudden before the wind; and that'll give our chaps time to drop them oar-blades a few chops on some of the lubbers' heads. Give 'em a bit of advice, not to chop too hard, 'cos it might make 'em sore—I mean in'ards like; and if that there Johnson and the half-breed was gone, there's some tidy seamen among 'em. But lor bless my heart, Master Brand! what a mistake it is to fly in the face of Natur', and try to make a man half a black and half a white! Just look at that chap of ours—there's a specimen of what you get—he aint clever enough for a white, nor he aint stupid and beastly enough for a black. He's all hugamabuff, as we used to call it, neither one thing nor the other. I wonder, though, whether he's going to help 'em? I should say not. He aint very fond of hard knocks."

Brand did not reply, for he was screening his eyes with his hand, and watching the boat, that had now become so distant as to be barely discernible.

But before long it tacked; and now, plainly enough, Brand could see that the object of the helmsman was to lay her side by side with their own, and, but for the design being suspected, the plan must have succeeded.

"They're a-coming this time, sir—safe," said Harris, softly. "No, not this time. Take it coolly—another tack will do it."

And so it proved, for after the next tack it was plain that a right calculation had been made.

"Don't be excited, sir. Take it coolly," whispered Harris. "I'd take the boat-hook if I was you; and if I could hitch it into Master Johnson anywheres, I'd have him overboard, and bring him here, bless him! A couple o' days lashed hand and foot in the bows wouldn't do him no harm."

Another minute and the other boat was close alongside, with her crew ready to grapple; but, by a clever manœuvre with the tiller, Harris completely balked the plan, the crew of his own boat contriving, evidently with great satisfaction to themselves, to administer a few smart blows with their oars.

The next minute they were far ahead, and listening to the disappointed curses of those whose plan had so signally failed.

CHAPTER XXII.—FIRE AGAIN.

HUNGER is said to tame a lion; thirst certainly tamed the wilful spirits in the other boat; and at the end of the next evening those on board were glad enough to petition for a little water; and on the boat being allowed to come sufficiently near for each man to take his portion, George Brand smiled grimly as he saw that, by way of a peace-offering, the men had bound Johnson, who was lying in the bows of their boat.

"You'll take him off, and put Dick Lee aboard, won't you, sir?" said one of the men, humbly.

"No, my lad, nothing of the kind," said George. "I only wanted to bring you to your senses. Now follow close in our wake till we make the island."

And on they sailed, making a boat-voyage, tedious indeed, but free from further adventure, till they sighted the blue, clearly-seen shores of the island, just before sundown.

There was the mountain rising up against the glowing sky, the sun setting at last as if close behind

it, throwing it up so plainly that it required no great stretch of the imagination to fancy that the plantation-house could be seen half-way up.

Night fell, and they sailed on still, there being no dangerous reefs here to warn them off; but the wind was unfavourable, and the progress slow.

It was Lee's watch that night, and a trusty hand was at the helm. As for the other boat, that was about a quarter of a mile astern; and now, utterly weary, but with a calm sense of security, and thinking of the meeting on the morrow, Brand took his last look round, and then lay down to sleep.

How long he had slept he knew not, but he was awakened by a hand laid upon his breast, and opening his eyes, it was to see Richard Lee leaning over him, his face lit up by a strange glow, as he stooped down, with one arm outstretched.

"Morning?" exclaimed Brand, starting up.

"No, sir, fire!" was the reply.

CHAPTER XXIII.—RESCUE.

THE young man's heart leaped, as he saw plainly enough from the direction of the island the bright, ruddy glow of a fierce fire. Upon what part of the island it was he could not, of course, tell, for there was no guide—nothing to be seen but the red glow lighting up the dark sky; and with the wind still blowing keenly from a quarter that compelled them to tack again and again, the advance of the boat was but slow.

The surmises of the men were various, as were the localities determined upon: some said it was the house at the head of the bay, others that it must be the warehouses; others again, and among them Harris, favoured the theory that it was one of the negro villages. One thing, though, seemed certain—that it was not the plantation-house half-way up the mountain.

It was a fearful task, sitting there inactive watching the progress of a fire, and knowing that there was disaffection amongst the slaves, wondering whether this could be in any way connected with it.

At one moment Brand was wishing that he had persuaded Lena to accompany him in the schooner; but the next, he had chased the folly away, telling himself that his ideas were romantic and absurd.

A few words with Lee explained that the fire had been but of very short duration when he was called, the flames seeming to have darted into the air suddenly; and as Brand sat there watching, it was to see before long that the glow was perceptibly less, and long before morning it had completely faded from their sight, leaving the sky once more dark and star-spangled, with the wind still blowing almost dead in their teeth.

Brand watched anxiously till the first golden messengers far on high proclaimed the coming of the morn, when the sun rose, with them sailing slowly some half-dozen miles from the island, and tacking to and fro in their endeavours to make the bay.

"Out with your oars now, my lads," said Brand.

And these soon effected a change, the men brightening up now that the harbour was so near at hand. They had a quip and a jest to pass round, and a few remarks concerning Mr. Ansdell's rum.

Brand did not like to check them; but his heart was full of forebodings as they drew nearer to the shore.

As far as he could see, all was bright and glowing as ever. But for that fire, he would have been ready to accuse himself of folly; for gradually opening out before them was as lovely a scene of peace as eye could rest upon.

"Give way, my lads!" he exclaimed at last, for in his anxious mood the boat seemed to crawl.

"Look here, sir," exclaimed Harris, suddenly—"if you'll take my advice, you'll have the helm put up a bit, and run for that p'int yonder. There's some one making signals."

Brand looked in the direction pointed out, and, shading his eyes from the sun, he made out that there was a figure close beneath some trees to the south of where the bay opened out, making signals with a handkerchief, which he was waving frantically above his head.

"Run for the point," said Brand; and the boat's head was changed a little, and catching the wind now, it ran rapidly towards the figure, which did not for a moment cease to wave the handkerchief it held.

"He's in a hurry, whoever he is," growled Harris, as they got closer in. "Any one would think the island was too hot to hold him, and that what he wanted to do was to give us a dollar a-piece to ferry him over to the tother side—anywheres, you know: Europe, Asia, or Africa. We're a-coming. You'll make that 'ere arm o' yourn ache d'reckly."

On went the boat, catching the morning breeze more and more, till she seemed to leap over the waves, which grew rougher as they neared the shore; for though the land-locked bay was perfectly smooth on the outer shores of the island, the great rollers swept in, making a surf so strong as to render it almost dangerous to land.

"Any one would think that he was in a terrible stoo," said Harris, at last, after watching the figure for some time. "Put yer handkerchy away, man: we're a-comin' as fast as we can, and we can't come no faster. What's the good o' makin' yourself a human windmill? Keep quiet, will you? Why can't you take a bit of advice when it's given you? I know that 'ere arm 'll ache like fury."

He spoke in such an injured tone, that the men laughed heartily; for why should they not be amused? The schooner was sunk, certainly; but that was not their loss. They had done their best to save her; and now, after much toil, they had reached the pleasant isle once more. It was a time for them to be light-hearted, and any trifle afforded them mirth.

"Why, I say!" exclaimed Harris, suddenly, "way there—another point or two!"—this to the helmsman. "I say, ease that sheet a bit, will you? Do you want us to be over? Don't you see how the breeze freshens? Here, some on you, sit over to wind'ard, will you, and trim the boat? That'll do. Now we're going 'an'sum. But, I say!" he exclaimed, making a telescope of his hands, "if I don't—yes—no—why, hang me!" he cried, slapping his thighs, "if it aint old Caterpillar!"

"What!—who?" exclaimed Brand.

"The overseer, sir—that old nigger-licker with

the long legs and yaller jaws—him as looks as if he had been suckled on egg-yolks, and got the perennal janders hot and strong. It's him, sure enough. Get your hand over your eyes and look."

"I believe you're right, Harris," said Brand, in an agitated voice; "but what can he be there for alone?"

"Goodness knows, sir! S'pose you'll go on, though?"

"Go on? Yes, of course," cried Brand.

And the boat darted on till she was fast nearing the heavy rollers, and not a hundred yards from where Jefferson—for he it was—still stood, frantically signalling; though now they could see that he was looking behind him from time to time.

"I tell you what," said Harris, "if you take a bit of advice, you'll tie the sleeves of a jacket and the legs of a pair of trousers tight up with some spun yarn, for that 'ere chap's licked niggers till he's a lunatic. He's mad as a March hare, and madder, too, or else he wouldn't be out here by himself. No one lives out here. Depend upon it, he's turned into a regular wild man o' the woods since we've been away, and that we shall want a strait-waistcoat don't doubt. But—hallo!"

"Here, quick! run her up! Give way, men—take your oars! For Heaven's sake, look sharp: the man will be killed!"

George Brand was an Englishman born and bred, and though he had hated Jefferson intensely, he could not stand and see a fellow-man in peril without stretching forth a hand to help him.

His exclamations were well-timed; for now, to the astonishment of all on board the boat, the cause of the overseer's violent signalling became evident. Suddenly, from out of the wood behind, a dozen negroes, one and all carrying some weapon or another, rushed and made at Jefferson, who, after one final dumb appeal for succour to those in the boat, levelled his piece, fired, and a negro dropped. The others, however, came on furiously, in spite of the overseer's clubbed rifle, which he now swung round his head with all the energy of despair.

"They're in earnest, anyhow!" exclaimed Harris, as they neared the scene of the fray.

And he saw two blacks roll over from the furious club blows of the rifle-butt.

There was evidently, though, no chance for the overseer to escape with life unless help came quickly, for the blacks were furious, and closing in upon him rapidly as he backed towards the boat. It almost seemed as if they were maddened by the fear of losing him whom they had marked out for their victim, so savagely did they press him.

But, nerved by despair, Jefferson fought well; and, though he had received many a cruel blow, two more blacks went down before he was amongst the breakers, beaten down upon one knee, apparently lost. A stalwart black, who had pressed him harder than any of the others, now raised a mattock, and in another moment the overseer would have been brained, when, with a rush through the foam, George Brand dashed in unarmed, but his fist darted out from his shoulder like a fleshy flash, striking the powerful black right in the throat, when he went down as if felled by a poleaxe.

"Give it 'em, my lads! Take my advice, and never mind their heads—nigger's heads is made o' ebony—lay into their shins!"

So shouted Harris, as, with half a dozen sailors, each armed with an oar, he made at the blacks, who, after a few blows, turned and fled, leaving their adversaries masters of the field; and in less time than it takes to relate it, Jefferson was caught up, run through the breakers, rolled on board, and the men forced the boat through the white water, climbing in themselves the next moment, to bale furiously, for she was half full of water.

"What is the meaning of all this, Mr. Jefferson?" asked Brand, anxiously, as soon as they were beyond the roar of the waves, and the boat was being headed for the bay.

"Meaning!" said Jefferson, savagely, as he glared in a wild, malignant way at Brand. "You've come back, then?"

"Yes," said Brand, fiercely—"you did not drown us this time!"

He repented his words the next moment; but if countenance could speak, that of the Yankee showed plainly enough who was the guilty man.

"But we'll talk of that by-and-by. There was a fire last night," said Brand. "We saw it from out yonder. What does it all mean? Have the blacks risen?"

"Oh, nothing," said Jefferson, with a malignant grin. "They are a little at their mischief."

It was plain enough that this man was not to be trusted. Brand could see that; but then, every scrap of information was valuable, and there was none other present to ask.

"Where is Mr. Ansdell?" exclaimed Brand, then.

"And Miss Ansdell?" panted Jefferson; for his breast heaved still with his late fearful exertions.

"Yes, where are they both?" exclaimed Brand, unable to restrain his impatience.

"Oh, up at the house, I should think," was the reply.

And the man showed his teeth, as he pointed across the bay, towards where stood Mr. Ansdell's house.

"There's something at the bottom of all this here, sir," whispered Harris. "Take my advice, sir. Don't you trust him an inch."

"I don't mean to," was the whispered reply; "but run us up to the wharf as quickly as you can."

Before they reached the wharf they caught a glimpse of the warehouse, a wall or two, and a heap of charred ruins; while a glance through the trees higher up gave them a faint glimpse of the plantation-house, a blackened ruin.

Brand turned to Jefferson, who was watching him narrowly with the same diabolical expression upon his countenance.

The boat was about to be headed for the house at the top of the bay, which seemed to stand uninjured, when a word from Lee drew all attention to another figure, signalling to be taken on board, from the sands near the old wharf; while, as they looked, half a dozen blacks rushed out of the woods, and pursued the signaller along the sands, till nearly

opposite the boat, where he rushed through the shallow water, and, being a good swimmer, he was soon taken on board.

"Joe Wilton!" exclaimed Brand, amazed.

"Thank Heaven!" was the poor fellow's first remark, as he turned to Brand. "Get over to the other side," he then said. "Some of them may yet be alive."

"In Heaven's name, tell me what all this means!" exclaimed Brand, frantically. "What is wrong, and where is Miss Ansdell?"

"In heaven," was the calm, sad reply. "The blacks rose, sir, and have burnt and murdered all before them. Plantation-house, the warehouse, and my father's home have been destroyed, and the last while I was away. I came to try if I could get some more powder, after we had fought to the last; but it was impossible, and I have been hunted ever since. They burnt my father's place last, and they are round there still in force," he said, as he pointed across the bay to the rocky point, where, for the first time, Brand now saw a mass of blackened ruins.

"Who were there?" he asked, hoarsely.

"All of them. The men and the women—all but this one," he continued, contemptuously, "who left us in the lurch."

Jefferson did not speak, but smiled at both with the malice of a fiend.

"What?" exclaimed Brand just then, for the other's lips moved.

"This," exclaimed Jefferson, "that if I cannot have her, you never will. She's dead, man—dead! They burned them all last night, while I lay in the cane plantation, and heard them shriek for mercy."

"You dog!" cried Joe Wilton, striking the overseer across the mouth with the back of his hand. "How dare you? It is through you that all this horror has come to pass, and now you insult us."

Jefferson made as if to use his gun; but a strong arm was upon his shoulder, and, looking up, there was Harris at his side.

"I believe I should be givin' good advice," said the old sailor, "if I told my lads here to pitch you overboard; for you aint no use here, nor yet no ornament. You only make people spiteful. Jest *you* take a bit of advice, my yellow friend, and hold your tongue while you're safe."

Both boats now ran for the spot where the Wiltons' house had stood, and after a few words of consultation it was resolved to land, each man arming himself with an oar.

They had hardly run the boats upon the sand, and sprung ashore, before a motley crew of blacks came yelling out from the plantation, and rushed at them. For a moment the sailors wavered, and made as if to run back to the boats; but, shouting to them to come on, Brand rushed forward, armed with the boat-hook. Harris and Lee followed, and the rest, cheered by the example, dashed on after them, striking right and left at the blacks, till, staggered by the bold onslaught, they turned and fled, leaving the crew of the schooner masters of the field.

"There, go and search!" exclaimed Joe Wilton, in a choking voice, pointing to the charred heap that had then ceased to smoke—"I can't, I have not the courage."

George Brand stood still, for his heart, too, failed. He dared not advance to gaze upon the remains of the victims of that fearful night.

At last, though, he stepped forward, but only to start back in real alarm, as from behind the charred heap a blackened figure, whom he took for a fresh foe, rose up, ran forward, and then fell, and rolled over.

He half rose, though, the next moment, and pointed towards the spot whence he came, as Joe Wilton darted forward.

"What, Tom!" he exclaimed, joyfully.

"The cave—the cave!" was the hoarse reply.

And then the poor fellow fainted.

"Here! come here, quick!" shouted the younger Wilton, excitedly.

And rushing over the charred ruins, he leaped at the opening from which his brother had emerged, and began to tear aside the blackened planks, till Brand came to his side, when, leaping into what looked to be a hole, the young man returned the next moment, bearing what seemed to be a corpse, and laid it down upon the sands.

Brand plunged in the next, to find himself in a cavern-like cellar; and as his eyes became used to the darkness, he could see that at the extreme end, lying in various attitudes amongst casks and lumber, were those whom they sought; but whether living or dead it was impossible then to say.

Before ten minutes had elapsed all were borne out, and laid upon the sands, where, with the soft breeze playing upon their cheeks, first one and then another began to show some tokens of reviving consciousness, till George Brand, as he knelt there with his arm beneath a blackened, pallid head, began to feel that he had not, after all, arrived too late; the cave, beside which the house of the Wiltons had been built, for the sake of the convenience it afforded as a cellar, having formed a place of refuge to which they were driven by the fire, whose suffocating fumes had all but proved fatal.

The men of the party quickly revived; and it was well they did, for they served to reinforce the crew of the schooner; for now, once more, the blacks came yelling from the wood, but only to be encountered by so bold a front that they had to retreat, but not without a struggle, in which all took part.

"I don't know, sir; but it strikes me as the boats would be the safest place," said Harris, coming up, and wiping the perspiration from his forehead. "Oars are heavy weepuns, and we've lost one man now as a prisoner. We may lose more next time."

"Who is taken?" eagerly inquired Brand.

"Old Caterpillar—a villain!" replied Harris, in indignant tones, as he stepped forward, and whispered in the young skipper's ear.

"Are you certain?" exclaimed Brand.

"Swear it," was the laconic reply. "He'd covered you with that rifle of his, and I was too much startled and took aback to run and stop him; and it's my

belief he'd have fired. But he was so took up with his aiming that he didn't see a black fellow rush at him; and, before any one could interfere, he was beaten down, and half a dozen of them dragged him through there."

And the old sailor pointed to an opening amongst the trees.

"Here, quick—some of you, come on!" shouted Brand, excitedly; "we must not leave a white man in their hands."

"Here, come on and be killed," growled Harris. "Nobody won't take advice nowadays."

He ran after Brand, closely followed by half a dozen sailors, and both the Wiltons; but they returned at the end of a few minutes, shuddering and horror-stricken, for they had seen the last of the overseer.

CHAPTER THE LAST.—A LITTLE MORE ADVICE.

DREADING a fresh attack from the blacks, the whole party embarked in the two boats, loading them almost to the water's edge; but by careful seamanship they both arrived in safety at a tiny quay, some twenty miles away, where part were landed, while the rest made a safe run to Kingston, from whence a small sloop immediately started for the remainder.

Old Harris was amongst those who stayed behind, because he said he had a liking for Mr. Ansdell, and he didn't like to leave the skipper, who stayed as well.

"And Heaven bless you," said old Harris, when relating the incidents from which the notes of this story were taken, "if you'll take my advice, you'll get married, for a prettier sight than to see them two—the skipper and Miss Lena—walking about in that island, like a young Adam and Eve in everyday life in a new garden of Eden, you couldn't find nowhere, and so I tell you.

"But that affair left its mark on some, in the shape of scars and burns; and that young Tom Wilton had a sort of scar, too, which troubled him—a sort of heart-mark about Miss Lena; but he acted like a man, he did, when he saw she cared for somebody else, and she looked upon him as a true friend when we all got back to Jamaiky.

"Our skipper's been married a many year now; but he keeps to the old trading still amongst the islands; and last time we were that way, we landed at the old place for water, and found the Wiltons and Headleys had got back, and married together, and built again, and were cultivating the land. They told me they'd been back ever since six months after the break-out; for they heard from a ship as stopped there that the place was empty, the blacks having boated and canoed themselves away somewhere, where no one knew, nor wanted to, for they were a good deal drove to what they did; and if I gave my advice to anybody, I'd say, 'Don't make no man a slave;' and if they took that there bit of advice, I should go a little further, and say, 'If you must live somewhere, let it be where you can be safe, and not in such a volcano sort of a place as was Plantation Island.'"

THE END.

A Tale of a Slave.

CHAPTER I.—A REFUGEE.

"NOW I want to know, Rae, whether you know it is really wicked to swear?"

"Go and ask my wife, and if she isn't asleep she'll tell you."

"I will."

And the speaker jumped up.

"No you won't, Tom. You lie down again, you dog. 'Pon my soul, Tom Foster, Lieutenant R.N., you're about the most artful scoundrel that ever breathed."

"Most potent commander, why?"

"Because you turn everything into an excuse for getting down into the cabin when my wife—and somebody else—is there; or for getting up on deck when my wife—and somebody else—is there."

"Absurd! What nonsense, Rae! Why, you told me to go and ask her something or another."

"Did I?"

"Of course you did."

"Well, the more fool I! But what did I tell you to ask her?"

"Oh, about—about—a—"

"No, thanks; I won't smoke. It's hot enough as it is, and one seems to be burning when emitting smoke. Phew! What a place! Can't you make an excuse for a run out to sea?"

"No," said Lieutenant Rae, lying with half-shut eyes, gazing landward at the thick haze which shut them in. "No, Tom; I have my suspicions about this pleasant mangrove swamp and sluggish river. I fancy there are some nice games carried on in the crooms there, and mean business if I can."

"But the ladies, Rae. It is killing work here. The heat is insufferable."

"Now, look here, Tom," said Lieutenant Rae, a most thickset, stubborn-looking Englishman, who would have been fair at home, but whom service at this station had burnt of a dark brick red—"Now look here, Tom, it won't do: duty's duty. They wouldn't stop at Madeira, and I put it fairly before them that I must watch the coast. They wouldn't listen to reason, so they must put up with the consequences. I can't help the heat. I didn't make it so hot, did I?"

His second in command frowned, fidgeted about, and ended by reaching out his hand for a spirit bottle and glass.

Before he could get them, though, his companion snatched the bottle away, to Foster's great annoyance.

"Don't drink any more, Tom. 'Taint good for you."

"Hang it, Commander Rae, you grow a worse tyrant every day."

"How beastly disagreeable being in love's made you, Tom!" said Rae, languidly. "You're a great fool, Tom, and you've been like this ever since Helen came on board. It's very stupid of you. She's very pretty, but she's got a temper just like her sister; and when she says she will do a thing, you may just as well strike your flag at once."

"Same as you did about bringing them on board," said Lieutenant Foster, sarcastically.

"Yes," said Rae, yawning, "I always surrender at the first broadside, except in matters connected with the profession."

"Ugh!" ejaculated Foster; "and you rule the poor little woman with a rod of iron."

"Nonsense, my dear boy, it's the other way on. But, I say, what's to be done? No wind, the heat insufferable, and getting worse. What shall we do—get the lads up for a general polish?"

"No, no, for goodness' sake let the poor boys be," said Foster, hastily; "the deck can't be cleaner, or the rigging in neater trim. If you set them to polish the big gun, it's only wearing it out."

"Heigho, you're right," said the captain, yawning. "Oh, Tom, if we could get alongside of a big slaver."

"Boat ho!" sang out the man at the look-out.

"Where away?" shouted the captain, leaping into activity, while Lieutenant Foster and the watch on deck forgot the heat, in delight at the prospect of something to break the horrible monotony, with its accompanying languor.

"'Bout three points off, on the lee beam," cried the man.

And on the instant glasses were levelled by the officers, and hands were shading eyes from the hot glare, as those on deck tried to pierce the haze between them and the shore.

"Can you see her now, my man?" cried Captain Rae.

"No, sir; fog's settled down again," said the man aloft.

"Confound the fog!" muttered the captain. "Are you sure?"

"Yes, sir; the fog bank seemed to open for a minute, and I could see the oars."

"He went to sleep and dreamed it," said the lieutenant, shutting his glass with a snap; and he spoke in a peevish tone.

"Tom, my boy, you talk as if you had sand down your back," said the captain, smiling. "Don't be impatient. My lads, don't go to sleep when I'm on board. Silence there forward, and keep your ears open, as we can't see."

A pin might have been heard to drop on the deck the next moment, and every sense seemed attent as the sickly white haze grew thicker and thicker, coming like a wall of mist towards them, and threatening soon to shut the little schooner in.

Just at that moment there was a buzzing of voices, and two ladies ascended from the cabin—the one a diminutive fair woman, with a pretty, bright, animated countenance; the other, a graceful girl of middle height, upon whose face your gaze rested long, as you asked yourself which was the particular feature that rendered it so attractive and sweet. They were both tanned by the sun, and laughingly in converse as they came on deck, dressed alike in a pretty yachting costume, but only to stop as if in dismay, as the captain caught sight of his lieutenant hurrying to join them, and exclaimed—

"Stop there! Silence aft."

The fair little woman, Mrs. Rae, made a charming little *moue* with her piquant red lips, and joining her hands, as if in supplication, looked in mock con-

sternation at her sister, who smiled in return, blushed as she saw Lieutenant Foster's movement, and then looked half indignant at the imperative order given by her brother-in-law.

The group on deck were almost statuesque for the next minute, and then with an impatient movement the lieutenant was about to speak, when a man, leaning over the bulwarks, said, softly—
"Oars!"

Every one listened attentively, but not a sound could be heard, and the fog was now within fifty yards of the vessel. Then came a slight groaning noise, as of wood grinding upon wood, the sound given forth by an oar in the rowlock of a boat. A minute after came a faint splash, and then the fog reached them, and shrouded the vessel; but as it did so, it was to become lighter in places towards the shore, where it seemed broken up into flakes; and at the end of a few minutes, though only dimly seen, there about a quarter of a mile from them was what seemed to be a large animal swimming, and leaving a widely diverging track behind him; but, seen through the mist, everything was so indistinct that those on board the gunboat were unable to make out what it was.

"It's a shark, spritsail-yarded," cried one of the men, alluding to a cruel custom amongst sailors of running a spar through the nose of this water tyrant, and sending him adrift, unable to sink, to die a miserable death.

"There's the boat," cried another man, for the fog lifted just then a little; and, dimly to be seen, there was a boat in pursuit of the first object they had seen, which was, however, evidently invisible to the pursuers, who were pulling wide of the mark.

"It's a ship's boat, pulled by four men," said Lieutenant Foster, now growing interested, as he used his glass.

"And that's a man they're after," said the captain; "he's swimming with one arm over a big spar. They don't see him, though. Yes, they do; and by Jove, yes—no—yes—they are going to fire at him."

As he spoke, heard in a dull smothered way, came the noise of firing—shot after shot, apparently from a revolver; but with what result it was impossible to say, for the fog closed in once more.

"Confound the cowards!—shooting a man like that. Here, lower down the quarter boat. No, stop; they'll have him long before we can help him; cast loose that gun, and fire them a blank cartridge, while you get down the boat, Foster, and bring the man on board."

The ladies turned pale, but they stood firm, while, in an incredibly short time, one of the smaller guns was cast loose, a cartridge rammed in, and before the boat, with its crew, could kiss the water, there was a flash, a heavy, dull thud, and the fog seemed to be parted for a minute to allow the boat to enter the rift; then, like a curtain, it was lowered again, the sound of the oars died away, and all was silent expectancy.

But the fog did not long remain stationary; it opened out again till the natty, yacht-like schooner, with its trim rigging, white deck, and bright guns, lay, as it were, in a clear space, some acres in extent, looking like a lake surrounded by a wall of fog.

Every one was on the look-out for the boat, but it had long since disappeared, when suddenly from out of the fog there came the figure of the fugitive, evidently making for the schooner.

"He swims well," muttered the captain, as every one on board watched the man's progress. "Be ready there with a rope forward."

For the man was so active in the water that there seemed to be no necessity to launch another boat, especially as the one that had disappeared in the fog might at any moment return.

Suddenly, though, the swimmer uttered a wild cry, and began to beat the water frantically.

"Why, they must have hit him," cried the captain, raising his glass. "No—good God!" he exclaimed aloud, "the sharks!"

"Oh, Edward, pray save him!" shrieked his sister-in-law, in horrified tones, as, unable to resist the terrible fascination upon them, the ladies ran to the side to watch the poor wretch, who now seemed in deadly peril.

A boat was lowered directly; but meanwhile a conflict that betokened speedy death to the swimmer was going on. As he made his way more out into the open, it was plain enough that, as Captain Rae had said, the man was supporting himself by one arm over a good-sized spar, while with the other he forced himself through the water. His human enemies were not in sight, and it was probable that they had been frightened off by the gun; but now, plainly seen, there were no less than three sharks cruising round and round him, as he beat the water, their back fins thrust out, and every now and then one giving its tail a vigorous stroke, and turning on one side, showing its creamy underparts as it rushed by the swimmer.

"Can't you shoot them—with the big gun?" whispered Mrs. Rae, hoarsely, while her sister stood horrified as she clutched the bulwarks.

"You foolish little woman, no," exclaimed her husband. "Ah!"

He uttered an exclamation as of pain, for it seemed that all was over, two of the sharks having simultaneously dashed at their intended victim. But it was on the side of the spar, and this had shielded him from the attack; one striking its nose heavily against the wood, the other seizing it in its teeth, and both drawing off, baffled.

The next moment, though, the third made a dart, when, by a vigorous splash on the part of the swimmer, he too retired, and they began cruising round him again, plainly visible from the deck, and evidently waiting to make a fresh attack.

The fugitive lost no time, though, but swam bravely for the schooner. A glance had shown him that the signals he had made by waving his hand were seen, and that help was coming. But the question was, would it be in time?

Again one of the sharks made a dash, and this time, as it raised its shovel nose, it glided right over the spar, missing its aim; while, giving up swimming, all that the fugitive could do was to beat the water, and scare his enemies away.

They were evidently afraid, sailing to and fro, but it was only to get a better opportunity to tear their victim. Had he ceased shouting and splashing,

they would have closed and torn him limb from limb.

But in the meantime the boat was nearing, and if he could hold out for a minute he would be saved.

Mrs. Rae stood gazing with fascinated eyes, while



her sister, after seeing the sharks apparently leap on their prey, allowed her face to go down upon her hands, not daring to look save when some exclamation on board made her start up.

There was another dash made by the sharks; but this time, when the attack seemed more savage than ever, the swimmer loosened his hold of the spar, dived under his enemies, and came up nearer the boat, striking out now with all his might, while the baffled sharks, as if puzzled by the manoeuvre, swam round for a moment or two before starting in pursuit.

They were after him, though, directly; and a man stood up with a boat-hook in the bows of the boat, ready to help, though the chances were that a violent swirl in the water and the stains of blood would be all that would be seen of the swimmer.

Another dozen yards though, would do it, when the sharks were upon him, and Mrs. Rae gave a faint shriek. The man dived quickly, and they shot by him; turned, and were coming on again, when the boat was up, and the man in the bows, turning his hook into a spear, struck one monster a tremendous blow on the head, another man seized the swimmer by the arm, and was dragging him on board, when a second shark, frantic at being balked of its prey, made a dart, rose at the swimmer, and, but for the impetus of the boat, would have seized him. As it was, the monster literally leapt on to the boat, and glided over its bows on the other side; while the third struck at and grazed the poor fellow's legs with his great, cold snout.

That was the last attack, though; for the fugitive lay the next moment panting, and with eyes closed, at the bottom of the boat, as her head was turned; and, with the sharks following at a respectful dis-

tance, she was pulled lustily to the schooner's side, where Helen Varley was one of the first to hold wine to the stranger's lips.

CHAPTER II.—UNION JACK.

IT was quite an hour before the man was sufficiently recovered to give a coherent narrative of his escape; and then, very fallow, but, in the naval shirt and trousers lent him, looking a fine, handsome, swarthy sailor, he stood before Captain Rae, and answered his questions in good English.

"How came you swimming there?"

"I was escaping, senor—I mean, sir."

"Where from?"

"A ship up the river."

"Was that her boat?"

"Yes, senor—sir."

"Why were you escaping?"

"Because, senor, I saw this British ship lying here, and I knew if I could get on board I should be free."

"Then you are a slave?" said Captain Rae, looking hard at the man's handsome, almost English face.

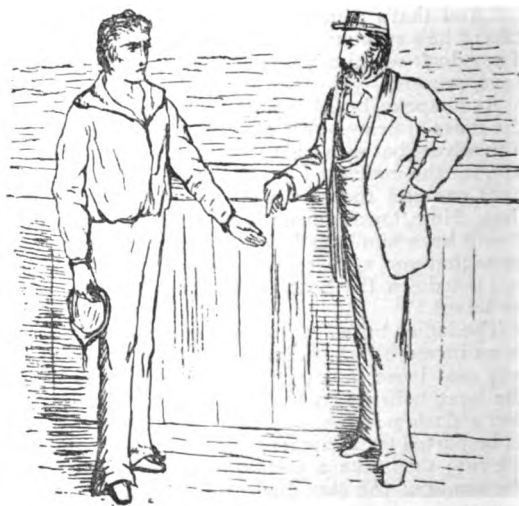
"I was, senor," said the man, proudly; and he glanced up at the British colours; "but now I'm free."

"Well said, by Jove!" exclaimed Captain Rae, as the first boat reached the side, and Lieutenant Foster sprang on deck. "You are no slave now. Then you were coming to us?"

"Yes, senor—sir, and they pursued me."

"Well, Foster?" said the captain.

"They got away in the fog, sir," said Foster; "and have gone, I think, up one of the creeks. Oh, you've got the swimmer."



The captain nodded, and went on.

"What vessel was that you escaped from?"

"A slaving schooner, sir," said the man.

"I thought as much," said the captain. "And she lies up the river?"

"Yes, sir. We sailed from Cuba two months ago, and she has been loading. She is now full of slaves, poor wretches; and I would not stay."

"You've done right, my man," cried Captain Rae. "By Jove, Foster, we're in luck. How about the weather, now?"



"Hang the weather!" said the young lieutenant, eagerly.

And then he turned pale, for he saw the new comer gazing eagerly at Helen, and her eyes were fixed half timidly on his in reply.

But there was no time given him for personal feeling, though Captain Rae's next words sent a pang through him.

"Take care of our visitor here," he said to his wife. "You two can help the doctor."

The next minute there was the bustle of preparation, and Foster brightened up, for the escaped slave came forward declaring himself quite recovered, and ready to accompany the little expedition that was being fitted out to go at dusk and seize the slaving craft, where she lay moored in the stream about two miles from the mouth.

On being questioned, the fugitive, who said his name was Antonio, told the captain that the mouth of the river was half concealed by trees; and that it was very small but deep, and with a very swift current. That there was a sand-bank or bar at the mouth, but that in calm weather it could easily be passed by the boats.

A breeze sprang up, and the fog cleared off towards evening, when, highly elate, two boats pushed off, ready to proceed up the stream as soon as it was dark, with Antonio for guide. Prize money, the chance of a fight, and active service, in place of the wretched, monotonous waiting, were all eagerly talked of by the sailors, whose impatience could hardly be kept within bounds. Men down with fever in their hammocks became wonderfully better, and several convalescents off duty volunteered for

the expedition, and looked disappointed when the captain told them off for the watch on board.

There was a long row for the two boats, for the mouth of the river was some distance south, and the wind was dead in their teeth; but the men pulled on steadily, and had to be checked again and again by Foster, lest they should get there before it was quite dark, the object being to take the slave schooner by surprise, and they knew not what watch might be kept for them by the natives near the river's mouth. Lieutenant Foster made them lie on their oars and wait for half an hour, till the increase of the wind and uneasy motion of the water taught him that it was time to push on, lest the surf should be too great upon the bar.

When at last they did bend to their task, the order being given to proceed, a sigh of satisfaction ran through both boats' crews, and the silence ordered ensued.

Lieutenant Foster took the rudder-lines in the foremost boat, and with Antonio at his side they reached the bar in the midst of darkness sufficient almost to hinder their quest; but beyond a slight tossing, and sufficient spray entering their boat to set the men baling, they had no difficulty, and five minutes after they were in comparatively smooth water, but fighting with the sharp current of the river now running swiftly with the retiring tide.

To have undertaken the task alone would have been impossible, but, in a low voice, Antonio pointed out to his leader that, though all seemed black ahead, right and left the darkness was more intense, and as they proceeded, this heavier gloom proved to be the forest, which came down to the water's edge, the mangrove trees growing right out and sending



a maze of tangled roots from amongst the slimy mud below the brackish water.

So narrow was the entrance that again and again the oars brushed against the mangrove roots, and more than once they had to put out farther into the stream to avoid them. But soon the way was clearer;

the sound of the beating surf died away, and giving the order to the men to give way, Foster led on right up the swift river.

It was a hard pull, the river winding here and there, but fortunately for them it grew a little lighter, though not so light but that by hugging the shore they could proceed unseen. The rowlocks were muffled, and save for an occasional splash, that might have proceeded from a fish or night bird, their progress was silent till they reached a spot where, in a whisper, Antonio announced that the river bent sharply round, and that within three hundred yards there was the croom, or village, of a native king, and the slave schooner lay moored close to the muddy shore.

Foster waited for the second boat to close up, issued his orders to them to board on the port side, and then together, and in perfect silence they rowed round the bend of the river, just as the sharp breeze swept the sky clear of clouds, and by the clear starlight they saw the native huts clustering thickly; but the reach of the river where they were was quite open, and showed not a trace of the schooner of which they were in search.

It was a bitter disappointment. They rowed here and rowed there, and Foster felt his dislike for his Spanish companion increase, in spite of his assurances that the schooner was there at mid-day, when he escaped while the crew were taking their siesta; but the fact was patent, the captain of the slaver had taken alarm. He was ready to sail, and he had dropped down the river during the afternoon, and then taken advantage of wind and darkness to pass the boats before they crossed the bar.

The men returned in anything but a good humour, but there was nothing else to be done. With that favouring wind it was probable that the ship-load of humanity would be out of sight before morning; but as the boats, after a rough passage, reached the gunboat, the wind ceased as if by magic, and once more there was a dead calm.

Before day could break, half a dozen telescopes were at work sweeping the offing, and to the great delight of the captain, Antonio pointed out the masts of the slaver far down in the west.

"How do you know that is the schooner?" said Foster, suspiciously.

"Because her masts rake back so, sir," said Antonio, without hesitation. "She's a very smart craft, and sails wonderfully."

"Come," said Captain Rae, smiling, "you must enter the Queen's service, my man. You are quite a sailor."

"I have been a slave sailor from a boy," said the young man quietly. "May I be a sailor who is free?"

"You shall," said Captain Rae.

And to the great delight of the crew his name was entered upon the ship's books, though Antonio was at a discount directly, and with all their fondness for a nickname they settled that he should be called "Union Jack."

CHAPTER III.—CHASING A SLAVER.

A STERN chase is proverbially a long one, but before this chase could be commenced it was necessary to wait for wind; and when the wind did

come, it was in hot, fitful puffs, that sent the gunboat surging through the water for a few hundred yards, and then died off, leaving the sails flapping for a few minutes before hanging listlessly from the yards.

This went on all the next day; but somehow, to the great annoyance of the gunboat people, the slaver, lying farther out, caught more of the breeze; and by degrees she extended her distance, until it was only by means of a powerful glass that her topmasts could be made out; and as evening fell once more, and the great, soft, mellow stars came out, to hang like lamps on high, the rigging of the slave schooner disappeared, and Captain Rae and his lieutenant paced the deck in anything but an amiable frame of mind.

The cool softness of the evening had tempted the ladies on deck; but when Mrs. Rae approached her husband, he snubbed her; and when the lieutenant saw Union Jack make a low bow to Helen, and she responded to it, he walked off to the further side of the deck, and the ladies went and stood alone, wondering at the treatment they had received.

But they were not the only people who set to work analyzing thoughts; for Lieutenant Tom Foster, as he leaned over the bulwarks, bit his lip angrily, and ran over his feelings, taking himself bitterly to task.

"Oh, what a fool I am!" he said to himself. "I suppose I'm in love, and, because I'm in love, I behave like the veriest of asses. Helen, bless her!—there, I love the very deck she stands on!—shows her sweet, womanly sympathy towards that poor escaped slave; and because I see that he is a well-made, shapely fellow, with good features and dark eyes, I fancy she has taken a fancy to him, and show myself over and over again to be the veriest of asses. There, by all that's honest and English, I'll behave like a man!"

"Wind at last, Tom," said a voice at his elbow, as a smart slap was given to his shoulder. "This is glorious!"

It was Captain Rae who spoke; and then, issuing order after order, the sheets were braced home. As the canvas bellied out, there was the loud ripple of water beneath the ship's counter; and as the *Stinger* careened over and rushed through the water, there was a glorious train of phosphorescence left behind, that looked as if the starry sky had fallen to the deep, dark sea, and the gunboat was churning the brilliant star points into a golden chaos.

There was but little sleep on board that night, for every stitch of canvas the heavily-rigged schooner would bear was crowded upon her; but when morning broke, the slaver was not in sight, for the favouring breeze had been one which evidently sent her flying through the water; and as the sun rose, she was far away on her journey, heavily laden with her human cargo.

A short consultation was held aft that morning as to the next proceedings.

"It's very provoking to have the game slip through your fingers like that," said Captain Rae, bitterly; "but I suppose we must go back and watch for another."

"Why not chase her right into port?" said Foster.

"Yes, but where is her port?"

"Surely our new man can tell us," said Foster.

"To be sure. Here, send Antonio aft."

"Ay, ay, sir," said the sailor addressed; "but does your honour mean Union Jack?"

"Union nonsense! Send the man we saved aft."

Ten minutes' conversation settled it. Antonio, or Union Jack, declared that the slaver would sail right for the Havana, just drop into the harbour, and then make for a port a few miles away, to which he could pilot them.

That was sufficient; the head of the *Stinger* was laid to the right point of the compass, and away she went over the broad Atlantic in full chase of the slaver, though without a hope of overtaking her till she was lying safe in port beneath the shelter of the Spanish guns.

CHAPTER IV.—THE LATEST NEWS.

IT was just at daybreak, after a long and tedious passage across the Atlantic, and through the reefs and islands of the Bahamas, that the *Stinger* was standing slowly in towards the anchorage of the Havana. Captain Rae had said over and over again that it was a wildgoose chase, but he had not been without hopes of overtaking the slaver; and even now there was the faint chance that they might overhaul her out of Spanish waters, and make her a prize without giving offence to the Dons.

For with the escaped slave on board, they had a pilot thoroughly at home in the movements of the *Santa Maddelena*, and it was worth some sacrifice to get hold of a vessel that was one of the swiftest slavers in the trade.

The customary forms were gone through as the *Stinger* cast anchor in a sulky, disappointed way; the vessel seeming to partake of the humour of the crew, for she looked slovenly and ill-kept, through a ruse suggested by Lieutenant Foster, whom a reproachful look from Helen's eyes had sent to his duty ready to dare anything.

The object was to allay the suspicion of the Dons as to the object in hand; but, all the same, the regular official boats put off and boarded her, not forgetting the quarantine.

It was towards evening that the Creole sailor stood side by side with the captain and his second in command. Glasses were busy, and the keen, dark eyes of the now free man had detected and pointed out the low hull and raking masts of the schooner. He had just been pointing them out to the captain, who inspected then through his glass.

"Yes, that's the same schooner," he said. "But, eh, what's the matter?"

For the young man had suddenly started, and slunk away from the side, pointing, with a shudder as he did so, to a well-manned boat, which had been making the circuit of the *Stinger*, evidently observing her carefully; but which now, at a word from her steersman, had begun to row rapidly away.

"My master, sir," said the young man, with a shiver. "They have been spying round the ship. Oh, sir, for God's sake don't give me up! Madam—ladies—pray the captain not to give me up."

He turned with clasped hands to where Mrs.

Rae and Helen were standing; but before they could speak—

"Go below, you stupid fellow," exclaimed Captain Rae, "and try and learn that you are now a seaman on board a Queen's ship."

The young sailor went shivering away, as if every nerve had been unstrung, and in the course of the evening the incident was forgotten. But Antonio was right. The boat he had seen was from the slaver, sent to see if the *Stinger* was the vessel that had been in chase of them; and before the sun was high the next morning, a gaily-painted barge, with awning over the stern-sheets, and a flag trailing behind, came rowing out of the harbour towards them.

"Here's a Spanish don coming on board, captain," said Foster, who had been hanging about Helen's chair.

"What do they want?" said the captain, bluffly. "Mind you give them no inkling of our visit."

The mystery of the visit was soon solved, for half a dozen of the occupants of the boat boarded the ship, accompanied by an official in uniform, and an interpreter.

"Well, gentlemen," said Captain Rae, bluffly. "What is your pleasure?"

"Simply this," was the reply. "You have an escaped slave on board, one Antonio, who has run from his master. You will have the goodness to give him up."

"And why?" said the captain, quietly.

"Don Ramon, captain of the *Santa Maddelena*, has given information, senior, and we will take him away. That is the man."

And he pointed to where Antonio was standing.

"Oh, you will not give him up, Edward," whispered Mrs. Rae, anxiously.

"Edward, dear Edward!" said Helen. "Oh, you cannot do it!"

"Hush, silence!" exclaimed the captain, coldly, as Lieutenant Foster looked fierce enough to charge the party and send them overboard; while the object of their solicitude stood leaning with folded arms against the bulwarks, watching for the result—the lash, perhaps death, if he were given up—yes, even in 1875.

"Do you know, gentlemen," said the captain, "that this is one of her Britannic Majesty's vessels, and that the slave who steps on board a ship over which waves the Union Jack is as free as if he had stepped on British soil?"

"Pardon, a thousand pardons, senior," said the official, blandly—"a new arrangement has been made. Your Admiralty has come to its senses. A circular has been sent out commanding that slaves who have taken refuge on board English vessels shall be given up to their owners. There is the paper. You can see it, and you must give up the man."

Captain Rae took the official note, and read it like one stupefied. Then he passed it to Foster, who glanced over it, and raised his eyebrows; while the Spanish official smiled and softly rubbed his hands, his followers looking from one to the other.

"The senior will obey that order, and give up Don Ramon's runaway slave. Your Government orders it."

Captain Rae did not move, but stood thinking, quite aghast.

"The senor gives him up?" said the Spaniard, suavely.

And he made a sign to his men, who advanced towards Antonio, while Mrs. Rae and Helen looked pitifully from the captain to the young lieutenant and back again.

"Give up—slave—under the Union Jack—made free—ordered by Government," muttered Captain Rae, composedly.

Then aloud—

"Give up a slave who has become free by the British flag? I'll be d— if I do. Here, Kate, Helen, go below; how dare you stay on deck when I'm swearing?"

For reply, Mrs. Rae smiled, and put her arm through his, while Helen was going to the other side, when Foster interposed, and she blushing took his arm.

"But, senor!" exclaimed the official, aghast.

"My lads," cried the captain, striding forward, "if a man dares to touch your new messmate, pitch him overboard."

"Ay, ay, sir," cried a dozen tars, bounding forward unarmed; while the Cubans, well-armed as they were, shrank back.

"But this means war, senor," exclaimed the Spaniard, pulling his moustache.

"Let it," said Captain Rae, fiercely. "I'll acknowledge no man's orders till I get them from my own Admiralty; and then let some one else command the *Stinger*, for she'll never more be sailed by me."

The Spaniard stormed, raved, and insisted; but, before he could understand it, he was quietly hustled over the gangway, and went down the side with his men; and as they pushed off he stood shaking his fist, saying to the captain—

"Dog! You shall be disgraced, or it shall be war!—war!—war!"

Captain Rae's brow knit angrily, but he said nothing, only watching until the boat was out of sight, when he seemed to wake up from his lethargy.

"Foster, take the cutter and board that English steamer, and bring the latest news—all, mind."

His order was obeyed with alacrity; but before the boat pushed off Antonio came forward in a slow, languid way—

"Captain," he said, "I get you into trouble. I will go in the boat and give myself up."

"You'll go below, you mutinous dog," roared the captain. "Give yourself up! No, my man," he added, softening, and patting him on the shoulder, "you're a slave no longer. Go down to your mess."

Before Captain Rae could stay him, the young Creole's eyes had darted a flash of gratitude; and, seizing his hand with all his Southern enthusiasm, he kissed it passionately, leaving upon it a tear.

At the end of an hour Lieutenant Foster was back with newspapers, and the information that the slave circular had been issued—the information was true.

"What shall you do?" said the young man, quietly.

"It means trouble."

"All hands weigh anchor," said the captain, stub-

bornly. "Tom, my boy, I'm going to take that slaver, and then—"

"What?" said the young man, eagerly.

"Retire into private life."

CHAPTER V.—FREE.

AT the end of an hour the *Stinger* was sailing right away into the offing, and the ruse succeeded.

"Where did you say Don Ramon's schooner belonged to?" said Captain Rae to the young Creole.

"Matanzas, captain," said the young man, eagerly.

"Ah, that will do," said the captain, musingly.

"Tom, my boy, we'll sail right away till dark, and they'll think we've gone with our tails between our legs, like the English curs that we are now. Pah! to come to this! Give up slaves! Then we'll 'bout ship, and lay wait for Master Don Ramon as he comes out, and makes for Matanzas; and, in Spanish waters or out of Spanish waters, I'll have his cursed slave-boat. They can't break me for it, because I shall resign."

"And so will I," said Foster, warmly, as a look from Helen rewarded his enthusiasm.

All fell out as was anticipated. Two days afterwards, just at daybreak, the *Stinger* was laying-to, a couple of miles from Matanzas, when as the sun rose, it was to show them the slave schooner not a quarter of a mile off, the *Stinger* being between her and the port.

All was ready, and before the *Santa Maddelena's* captain could recover from his surprise, a shot across her bows summoned him to surrender.

For answer the helm was rammed down, more sail was made, and it was evident that she meant to show them a clean pair of heels. But it was too late. In obedience to orders, the great gun was brought to bear, and a charge of grape sent rattling through her rigging, cutting away ropes, and so wounding one of her powerful spars that, as she careened over to the breeze, the yard snapped, the sail fell, and like a wounded duck the handsome vessel lay helpless upon the water, with the *Stinger* nearing her each minute.

Great efforts were made to repair damages; but before anything effectual could be done, the *Stinger* was close alongside, to receive a sharp volley of small arms and a round shot through her bulwarks.

"Plucky!" said Captain Rae, coolly, as he secured the cabin door. "But we'll soon stop that."

In effect, a couple of well-manned boats were lowered, and five minutes after they had boarded the slaver, driven her people below, and the British colours were run up, amidst the cheers of the men, delighted one and all at having taken a prize.

Meanwhile, though, Captain Rae, seeing that danger was at an end, had re-opened the cabin door, to allow his wife and her sister to return on deck to see the one wounded man, who had prayed earnestly that they might be fetched; and the one wounded man was Antonio.

With a relay from the gunboat, the damages on board the slaver schooner were soon repaired; and Foster signalled for instructions. These were his orders what to do with the captain and crew—

"Give them the boats, and let them row ashore."

They were not above ten miles from land, and as soon as the boats were lowered, preparations were made for setting sail; but this took up sufficient time to enable the slaver captain and his set of evil-looking scoundrels to row close up to the gunboat, where Don Ramon poured out a volley of abuse and threats as to what would follow as soon as he set foot on shore.

The derisive laughter of the sailors roused the Don almost to a pitch of fury, and he remained gesticulating, as he stood up in his boat, till the sails filled, and the two vessels sailed in company away.

As they rounded the lee of a small island, Captain Rae having for prudence sake determined to give the port a wide berth, lest he should get into any complications with the authorities, the wind fell calm once more; and there the two vessels lay, the torrid sun beating down upon them, and making the pitch ooze from the seams.

At the end of half an hour, while Captain Rae was impatiently pacing the deck, a boat pushed off from the slaver, and Foster came on board.

"Tut, tut, tut!" ejaculated the captain, impatiently. "Now what excuse have you to make, Tom, to get a peep at Helen?"

"It was not for that!" exclaimed the young man, indignantly, though the flush upon his cheek told a different tale. "Ah, Miss Varley!"

He was at Helen's side on the instant, her eyes anxiously seeking his.

"No, not touched," he exclaimed, smiling, and speaking as if she had said, "Are you wounded?"

"I—I mean we—my sister and I have been so anxious," said Helen, hurriedly.

"I'm not worth so much anxiety, Helen—dear Helen," he whispered, "and—"

"Now, look here, Tom," exclaimed Captain Rae, angrily. "I won't have any of this nonsense on board my ship. Helen, go below. Now Foster, what do you want?"

"How can you be such an ogre, Rae?" said the captain's wife, who had approached unobserved.

"Because I don't want to see another of her Majesty's officers made the slave of a designing woman," said the captain, gruffly, "and with no more authority on board his own ship than if he were a child. Mind, you women go ashore at the first opportunity."

Mrs. Rae smiled at her lord and master, and he turned away with a comical expression of annoyance and pleasure upon his countenance.

"How's the freed-man, Helen?" she said, to change the conversation.

"Very bad, I fear," said her sister, gently; "but he is sleeping now."

"Well, Foster, what is it?" said the captain, after uttering an impatient "Humph!"

"I've come about the poor wretches on board there," said Foster, in an undertone. "It's the old story—starvation, filth, stifling air. Numbers have died, and many are dying."

"You must do your best, my lad," said the captain. "It's rather hard on the boys, but they must help and put the slaver's hold right. Get the poor wretches on deck—all you can. Eh?"

"Helen and I have decided to go on board this slave-ship," said Mrs. Rae, quietly, as the captain turned sharply upon her.

"But my dear Mrs. Rae," said Foster, anxiously, as he glanced admiringly at Helen, "you don't know the state the poor creatures are in. Fever-stricken, covered with sores, many of them sick unto death."

"The more need then for help, Mr. Foster," said Helen, gravely.

"It's very good of you, my dears," said Captain Rae; "but I don't like the idea of your running into danger."

"If Englishmen go into danger," said Mrs. Rae, quietly, "why should not Englishwomen? Edward, dear, pray, pray, don't treat me as if I were a doll."

"But really, Mrs. Rae," began Foster, but a look from Helen silenced him.

And half an hour after those two brave-hearted Englishwomen were on the deck of that slaver, working like hospital nurses after a battle, though here the enemies that had stricken down so many were disease and man, who had joined forces for the occasion.

The scene was pitiable, as some poor attenuated girl, or once able-bodied woman, was borne up, ready to shriek with dread and pain, hardly realizing that it was not for some new cruelty that she was laid beneath that awning, and then lay gazing wonderingly up at the fair-faced strangers, who bent over each in turn, to bathe her face, or hold water to her parched lips.

"I don't want to be sarcy, sir," said an old sailor, as he turned to Foster, after helping to carry one of the slaves on deck—"I don't want to be sarcy; but once on a time I seed a picher of a lot of angels a-carrying o' somebody up to heaven."

"Well, James?" said Foster, smiling.

"Well, sir, they was all a lot of good-looking girls, with goose's wings and long petticoats; and I says to a mate as see 'em too, 'Bill,' I sez, 'this here's hot, mate. What does he mean by making all the angels shes?' But it's right, sir, quite right—women is angels; and if the capen's wife and the young miss aint got no wings, yet I'm darned if they won't soon come."

Tom Foster would have given five pounds at that moment to have set discipline aside, and wrung the honest fellow's hand, but it would not do; and the next moment the sailor was down below, helping up another frightened object, while the young lieutenant, with his love fast increasing to veneration, watched the actions of the well-bred, tenderly-nurtured English girl, in that hell upon earth, a slave-ship.

Night was falling when, unthanked by the poor half-witted, puzzled creatures they had helped, and thoroughly worn out by their exertions, amidst horrors, heat, and the foul odours of the vessel, Foster handed Mrs. Rae and Helen down to the boat.

Mrs. Rae had already taken her place in the stern-sheets, when Foster found a moment to whisper to her sister—

"Helen," he said, sadly, "this morning I loved you, and was hopeful; to-night I love you a hundred times as well, for your sweet, womanly tenderness to

those poor wretches; but I seem to be farther from you than ever."

She did not answer, and the tears were standing in her eyes as the young man helped her down to her seat in the boat. The next minute he was watching the broken water, as the oars dipped lustily; and five minutes later, in the dim light, he saw her go up the gunboat side.

It was somewhere about midnight when, oppressed by the heat, Captain Rae went on deck to take a look round. There was a pleasant sensation of coolness in the air, as compared to the stifling heat below, and after a word to the watch he went forward to where, upon the deck, lay Antonio, apparently sleeping; but as the captain took a lantern and leaned over him, he opened his eyes.

"Well, my man, how is it with you?" said Captain Rae.

"Not well, captain," he said, feebly; "but—hist!—what's that?"

He turned himself on his elbow in an attitude of attention.

"I hear nothing," said the captain, after listening intently.

"Yes," said the young man, eagerly; "boats—oars—I hear them plainly. Captain, they are coming for me."

"Lie still, my lad," said Captain Rae, pityingly. "The fever is upon him," he muttered.

"No, no, for God's sake do something!" said the poor fellow. "I am awake, not mad. Hush, there! Quite plain."

Captain Rae listened, but could hear nothing, and he tried again to soothe the sufferer, who grew half frantic.

"You will let them take me and your ship. Oh, captain, do something, or——"

"Boats off the starboard bow!" said one of the watch in a loud voice.

"There," whispered the Creole, whose senses had been quickened by his state, "quick, captain, act."

"Pass the word quickly for the men," said the captain.

And as he spoke he ran back to his cabin to seize a pistol, which he fired as a signal to his lieutenant in the slaver.

It was none too soon. The men had hardly seized cutlass and pike, when the boats, four in number, were close in, and made a dash to board them, three more having made for the *Santa Maddelena*, from whose sides there came the sharp fire of musketry, which was soon followed by a loud thud from the gunboat, as she sent a round of grape at an approaching boat.

But there was little time for firing; the attack had to be repelled at the point of pike and sword, and it was not until the boarders had been beaten back for the third time that they sullenly drew off into the darkness, pursued by shot after shot, though these had no effect.

A signal made to the *Santa Maddelena* was answered directly, Foster having, though nearly taken by surprise, beaten off his foes; and the wind springing up, both vessels made sail to leave such dangerous shores behind, the attack having evidently been made at the instigation of Don Ramon.

With the early morning, Antonio caught the captain's eye, as he was going about anxiously tending the other wounded men of his crew, Foster's party having escaped with a few trifling scratches. The Creole begged so hard to see the ladies again, that Rae went and roused them from an unquiet sleep, and in a few minutes they were by the Creole's couch.

His face lit up as they knelt by his side, their faces bathed with tears, for they had read in the young man's face that which needed no surgeon's words to tell—the coming end.

He could hardly speak, but, with an effort, raised their hands in turn to his lips; then turning his eyes upon Captain Rae, he smiled, half closed his eyes, and then opened them again, as the hearty British "Hurrah!" of the sailors fell upon his ears. Then for a moment a cloud seemed to cross his mental vision, but only for a moment, as, looking once earnestly in Captain's Rae's face, he said, softly—

"Free—free!"

And fell back—dead.

There was rejoicing amongst the crew of the *Stinger* as they towed their prize into port, to land one hundred poor wretches out of two hundred taken from the African shores, the rest dying like rotten sheep in the slaver's stifling hold. It was to be Captain Rae's last effort, he said; but it was not, for the first news that reached his ear was that the celebrated circular had been rescinded; and of his capture of a slaver in Spanish waters he never heard a word.

By the way, it is said that, after his next step in promotion's ladder, Helen Varley becomes the wife of Lieutenant Foster, R.N.

THE END.

Remission of Sentence.

DREARIEST of all spots upon dreary Quickmoor is the small town of Kingsford. Its sombre character arises from the fact that it is a convict settlement. The surrounding prospects, to the rambler who has any sort of love for the beauties of nature, cannot fail to please, though they are utterly destitute of the softer graces of an English landscape. The scenery is famous for its wildness, for its solitary expanses, for its rugged alternations of grassy waste and hills crowned with frowning blocks of granite.

One raw winter's morning the dull level of Kingsford life was stirred to its depths. The well-known signal was given that a prisoner or prisoners had escaped. Warders armed with carbines marched forth in twos and threes; the few inhabitants who were not in the immediate pay of the Quickmoor prison aided in the hue and cry, and suspended their ordinary avocations to take part in the chase.

At the Kingsford Arms, the one hotel in the place, the true cause of the alarm was soon ascertained. The convicts had been marched out as usual to the occupation of the day—some working at the buildings which were being perpetually added to the main establishment, others at reclaiming the ad-

jacent moorland for agricultural purposes. The warders were posted in their proper strength in the ordinary way, and the silent labour of the convicts was proceeding, when, as so often happens in those strange regions, a sudden mist arose, to develop swiftly into an impenetrable fog. This was the opportunity for which the discontented and insubordinate among the convicts had waited, probably for years; and now was their time. Under cover of the friendly veil, three of the building gang contrived to elude their keepers, and one man in the field, taking advantage of the momentary surprise into which the officials in that corner of the settlement had been thrown on hearing the signal, was equally fortunate.

The supposition is that a convict is known only as a number, as an unknown quantity of the human family; but the actual names of the missing men were, in the course of an hour, being whispered in the bar-parlour of the Kingsford Arms. Here a courageous sportsman, making the hotel his headquarters for the sake of the snipe and occasional black-game and woodcock to be had on the moorland; a couple of commercial travellers, waiting for the vehicle which would shortly bear them into more welcome beats; and a warder or two off duty, were assembled, discussing the event of the day, and speculating upon the probable results.

One other member of this company has yet to be mentioned, though perhaps we should take her presence as a matter of course. It was Miss Western, the hotel barmaid, waitress, and book-keeper, a reserved, ladylike, irreproachable person, who had fulfilled the multifarious, and not always pleasant duties of her post, with faultless faithfulness—courteous to all, familiar with none. For once, however, Miss Western's normal taciturnity was broken: there was no questioner more eager than she, until the full details had been told. It was to her that the prison official, over his luncheon beer, gave the names of the escaped convicts, with such incidental additions respecting their crimes, characters, and behaviour during imprisonment, as would be naturally interesting on so exciting an occasion. Prison-warders, albeit they are warders at Quickmoor, are very human; and Mr. Sullivan was not the only uniform-wearing individual in that out-of-the-way place who had long entertained a sneaking regard for pale-faced Annie Western.

The young lady, having obtained all the information which appeared to interest her, disappeared from the room. All present had observed a sudden change in her demeanour when the alarm was first given. A face which is always white as death cannot be said to turn pale, but there was an indefinable change in Miss Western's countenance which seemed to intensify the normal pallor, an ashiness of lip, and a startled expression of the eye, which did not escape the observation of those who knew her best.

"I am afraid Miss Western is a trifle frightened over this," remarked the prison official.

"Dear heart, no!" replied good Mrs. Preston, the motherly landlady of the well-ordered, homely inn; "she is often like that."

And so the matter dropped.

By and bye the fog lifted, and it was everywhere said that the chances of the convicts were now small. Hapless mortals! their hour of liberty had been brief, though not so bright, as a butterfly's! The pursuers—many, and on their mettle—had been on the track from the first, and it required only a clear atmosphere to put an end to the man-hunt. It was not long before a horseman galloped past announcing a capture; then a carrier, urging his sorry nag into a dangerous trot, that he might be the first bearer of the good tidings, told the whole village, as he jolted by, that he had heard shots fired down the ravine through which Fairman's Brook leaps from stage to stage into the arms of the far-away lowlands. Apart from the gathering crowd, and intently looking towards the ravine, stood Annie Western.

"I was sure our fellows wouldn't miss 'em," Sullivan said, lightly.

"Do you mean miss taking, or miss shooting them?" she asked in a voice that quivered in spite of itself.

"Either, or both," the man answered. "Our orders are very positive. We call for surrender three times, and if that fails—well, there's only one thing left. Here's the first captive," he continued, pointing to the emergence from a turn in the ravine of a slowly-moving body of men. "Whoever it may be, he's either settled, or badly winged. Winged, very likely, for they come at a slow pace, and halt now and then to change bearers."

Miss Weston's intense anxiety was visible in her parted lips, fixed and hungry eyes, and rapid breath; but she turned away with evident relief when Sullivan had named the three convicts as they were taken towards the ugly prison gates.

The fourth convict, then, was not captured. The search was thorough; yet the short duration of the fog had rendered it almost impossible that he could have escaped. Still, as the hours of the brief winter's day went on, the invariable news brought by drop-pers-in to the Kingsford Arms was that number Ninety-six could not be traced in any form or fashion.

At the Kingsford Arms, after dark, on the day of the occurrences above narrated, the snug bar-parlour was particularly well patronized. The shooting of three men in one day was not so common-place an event that it could be passed over without special celebration, and each new-comer as he entered brought in with him a sudden downfall of whirling snow, as the outer door was opened.

"That poor devil who's out of quarters to-night will wish himself back again," remarked the post-master, pointing with his pipe-stem over his shoulder to the north.

"Egad he will," chimed in one of the commercial gentlemen. "What is he?"

"What is he?" repeated Mr. Sullivan. "It must be a clever man to answer that unless the bird's been brought back to cage. If you mean *who* is he, I can tell you."

Some of the company said, "Ah! do;" others,

"Oh! thanks;" others, "Your health, Mr. Sullivan." All sipped their liquors and listened.

"Number Ninety-six was rather a curious case," the off-duty warder began. "He was a tall, strong-shouldered young man, straight as a poplar, and when they had cut off his beard he looked as beautiful as a woman. We've considerably over a thousand convicts on the books just now, and thirty of them are what are called gentlemen. Number Ninety-six, however, was the most genuine of the whole set. We find some of your real high-born gentlemen cutting up very roughly; directly the veneer is peeled off you have a very ugly description of timber indeed to look at. Ninety-six was real grit, though; and everybody is puzzled at his going off in this manner. But that is by the way. I said I could tell you who he is. Well, he's the son of old Sir Simeon Tolly, the banker, and he was transported for forging deeds and wills and other papers to an enormous extent. All kinds of people of quality have come down to this God-forgotten part of the world to see number Ninety-six; and Harry Hinton, a brother warder of mine, says he knew the family well, and can answer for it that there are things kept secret which would alter the complexion of the case considerably."

"And," said a farmer who had returned to say that if he was to get home that night he must be jogging pretty soon, or he would be snowed up, "it always happens to be your gentlemen convicts that get away. I dare say it's all right, but I never yet heard of a poor man doing it. No, no," he added, upon an angry exclamation from Sullivan, "I mean no offence, but it's the truth."

That was a doubly memorable night on Quickmoor, above all at Kingsford. The heaviest snow-storm of the generation buried the country before daylight; and in the morning Miss Annie Western was missing. They searched high and low without effect, until the postmaster delivered to Mrs. Preston a letter which had been slipped into his box during the night. It said:—

"DEAR MRS. PRESTON—Pray do not make any inquiries for me. I am gone, I hope for good; but, be that as it may, certainly not to return again. You have been as kind to me as a mother, and would have been kinder had I allowed you. Some day, perhaps, I may see you again.—Yours truly,

"ANNIE WESTERN."

It was tacitly understood at Kingsford that the two gentlemen who used to spend so much time at the little hotel, and write upon large blue sheets of paper, were important personages sent from London to make inquiries into recent events, and Mrs. Preston confided her suspicions to that effect to another customer, who came with his gun-case to Quickmoor after the snow had melted. She found this young gentleman, whose letters were addressed "Horace Herbert, Esq.," very sociable, and extremely affable. He took much apparent interest in the affairs of Kingsford, and was fond of chatting with the warders over a cigar; but it was observed that during his week's sojourn his shooting expeditions generally ended in an empty game-bag, or in

a total of snipe wholly inconsistent with the fame of the bogs. Wearily, at length, he packed up his breech-loader and cartridges, and foretold his departure on the morrow.

"We should have looked after you better, sir," the landlady said; "but I've never yet been able to fill up poor Miss Western's place."

"Indeed," answered Mr. Herbert, in the tone of one who was not at all interested in Miss Western or the landlady's difficulties.

"Poor girl, she left suddenly the very night when the convict got away."

"What is that?" he said, sharply.

Mrs. Preston repeated her information, and as she spoke, produced from her stomacher a photograph. It was a picture of the Kingsford Arms, with Miss Western standing in the doorway, looking dreamily over the distant moors, while a pony-chaise and a party of ladies and gentlemen, postured in and around it, filled up the foreground.

The young gentleman, as the landlady subsequently remarked, gave a great gulp, as if he were determined to keep down any expression of feeling, and turned towards her with a forced calmness of face and voice that frightened her.

"Where," he asked, "did you get this? Who is it?"

"That's Miss Western. She was standing at the door on an afternoon last summer, and looking—as she was fond of doing sometimes for half an hour together—right away to the hills yonder: we had a rare laugh afterwards; for, quite unknown to her, a travelling photographer took her in the picture, and she never knew it to this day."

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Remission of Sentence.

PART II.—CONCLUSION.



ERTAINLY not more than six weeks after the memorable snow-storm, Sir Berton Herbert, Bart., received a letter, bearing the post-mark of the town nearest to Kingsford, the central receptacle for all the correspondence swept up by the Quickmoor rural

postmen. This is a copy of the letter:—

"MY DEAR FATHER—I am sick and weary of the life of deception which this wretched business entails, and not the least repulsive portion of it is the necessity which the devil lays upon us of making other people deceivers too.

"Nothing whatever can be heard of our friend.

"It seems certain that he is not in this part of the country; equally unlikely is it that he could have escaped to the coast.

"But I have something that will pain you to know. Poor Alice, as I am convinced, lived at this inn—your daughter and my sister—Heaven forgive us! as a barmaid—for two years; and she disappeared mysteriously on the night of Tolly's escape. Deception again, you see. After that terrible trial and sentence, we, you may remember, received a letter from her from Rouen, announcing her intention of spending the rest of her days in an Italian convent. While we were searching the Continent for her, she was here as Miss Western, serving cider to the country folks, and waiting obediently upon any chance customer who required the ministrations of a barmaid.

"There is a warder here named Hinton, a private detective sort of person. I have discovered that he was induced to come here in the pay of and in constant communication with Alice. He was unable to do much; but on two occasions, he tells me, he delivered messages, assuring the convict that she was in the place, ever watchful of his interests. 'Tell her,' he sent answer, 'my degradation is light in comparison with her sorrow; tell her she has my pity, for she has my love.' This man (Hinton) says it is impossible that Alice could have had any hand in the escape, and the statements of persons who observed the wretched girl when the wounded prisoners were brought in quite corroborate this assertion. Hinton swears he, too, had nothing whatever to do with the matter; this we must take for what it is worth. It seems certain that Alice was taken by surprise; also that she is wandering in search of him.

"So far I have confined myself to facts, and you must pardon me if they have been put with apparent hardness. Pardon me also, and deem me not wanting in filial duty and affection, if I betray a hardness of heart in what I have yet to write, for it is, alas! an inherited hardness. But for your obstinate worldliness, these horrors would not have accumulated.

"To you the behaviour of your daughter and my sister may appear but the madness of despairing affection. You know that her life was bound up in his, and you cannot have forgotten how on that day when, in a frenzy of passion, she renounced you for declining to pledge yourself to endeavour to obtain what she termed a 'remission of sentence,' she declared that she ought to have been the convict, and not her lover and my unfortunate friend. When she overwhelmed you with reproaches as the cause of the crime, you pronounced her insane. Let me tell you the secret of the poor girl's blighted life. It was by her tempting advice that Tolly committed the forgeries. Until now this secret has been in her keeping, in mine, and in his; it is now in yours to use as you may please. I am bound to state the full circumstances, for it was your obdurate refusal to sanction Alice's marriage with the man of her choice, because he was not possessed of sufficient wealth, that put the devil into her soul, and his. Alice, distraught with remorse, confided this to me herself in an interview more painful than words can tell. I shall not rest, nor willingly see your face again, until I have found the unhappy girl whose love has been so woefully disastrous; but for whom in this world there can be no more happiness.

"Although, as a man of the world, you may find consolation in the knowledge that my friend's sentence was legally just, this letter will doubtless cause you some pain. For myself, the bitter grief of the immediate past, and the dark cloud hovering over the future, have frozen my heart to ice.—Your dutiful son, H. H."

The following communication was subsequently received by Sir Berton Herbert from Mr. Porson, a confidential solicitor, who had been despatched to a remote country village on a special mission by the hon. baronet:—

"DEAR SIR BERTON—I have, according to your instructions, proceeded to this place to inquire into the truth or otherwise of the statement made by the Rev. S. Marks, in reply to your advertisement offering a reward for information touching a certain missing lady.

"I am very sorry to inform you that there is no room for doubt that the unknown lady who died here, as described by Mr. Marks, was Miss Alice Herbert, your daughter. I enclose a miniature of Mr. Tolly, an old note from him to her, and a portrait of her brother, Mr. Horace Herbert; these formed part of the deceased's effects. I enclose, furthermore, a document, written and signed by Mr. Marks, the incumbent of this parish. I have communicated this intelligence to Mr. Horace Herbert. Awaiting further orders, I am, your obedient servant,

"H. W. PORSON."

(Extract from enclosure.)

"The deceased lady was found by a carter, partly buried in a snowdrift by the wayside, on the morning succeeding the great snow-storm of December last. She was insensible when taken to Manor House Farm, where every attention was paid to her. As clergyman of the parish, I was sent for on the same day. On arriving at the farm, I found that Doctor B. had succeeded in restoring suspended circulation, but the patient suffered much. During two days she rambled in her speech, and no information could be gained from her by which we could communicate with her friends and ascertain who she was, or where she came from. On the evening of the second day, Doctor B. informing me that the sufferer was dying, I at once repaired to the farm. It was but too evident that the sands of life were indeed fast falling. The fleeting spirit was now tranquil, but the patient was too weak to speak. She signified acquiescence in my desire to pray with and for her, and listened with closed eyes to my words. At the words 'remission of their sins,' the dying woman's hands unclasped, and she was heard by the good lady standing near her to whisper, 'Remission of sins. Ah! And remission of sentence at last.' Before I had finished my sacred duty, the lady, with a quiet sigh, and a smile beautiful to look upon, had passed away to the other world."

In the spring-time a party of children set out from Kingsford to pick violets in Druids' Wood. As they walked down the road, they halted to clamber upon the low stone walls to see the convicts working at the reclamation of the bog. The prisoners heard their merry voices, and turned away with downcast eyes, as if they would shut out the sound.

The flowers had sprung up beautifully after the severe winter, and our party of children had heard of their appearance. Bright as the sunshine that bathed the moorland in soft radiance, they ran from tor to tor, and from tree to tree, filling their baskets and pinafores with perfumed blossoms. Their pleasure was soon turned to fright. A little boy, penetrating farther into the thicket than his fellows, ran out into the daylight, with staring eyes and scared face. He said a dead man was lying there. The terrified children ran home and told their story, and in the afternoon the mystery of the convict's escape was solved. Number Ninety-six had secreted himself in the wood, and during the great snowstorm Nature had covered him with its own white shroud. Truly, as the unknown sufferer amongst kind-hearted strangers had said with her dying breath, there was vouchsafed at last, "Remission of Sentence."

So far as could be surmised, from a careful comparison of the governor's report of the investigations made then and previously, the convict, taking advantage of the outcry raised by the alarm in a distant portion of the grounds, had vanished in the mist, and concealed himself in a trench close to the prison grounds, until the darkness of night favoured his journey over the lonely two miles of moor intervening between him and Druid's Wood, and the heavy snow obliterated all traces of the flight. It was strongly suspected that Hinton, the warden on duty

near the convict at the time, knew something of the matter; but shortly after Mr. Herbert's visit to Kingsford, that official obtained leave of absence, on the plea of the sudden death of a brother, and had never returned.

False and Fair.

CHAPTER I.—COUSIN FOX.

SO my grandfather lay a-dying! My godmother had sent for my mother and me, and I might go to the death and to the funeral, perhaps to the reading of the will; and there might be other mysteries that I knew not of. Who could tell?

There was great haste. But there was no mistake about it. I was mentioned by name in my godmother's note: "Bring Clara; she will be a great comfort to me. Fox is here. I am sorry the roads are so bad; but do come to me, dear Mary. I have had such a sad time alone, till Fox came." My godmother was a young woman. She had married my grandfather when he was past three-score and ten, and he had been very kind to her then and ever since. It was made a great talk when they were married, and the world said there had been a plot to catch the old gentleman, who was very rich.

My godmother said, frankly, "It is the custom with us, and my father approved of the match. My husband would not allow him to speak to me about it, lest I should feel myself bound to favour his suit authorized by my father; but I understood it all. I am glad to have such a good husband, so rich; but it is sad to have driven away Fox."

Fox was my grandfather's grandson—our dear Cousin Fox, the supposed heir to the great estates of the house of Fox. But in the short time that intervened between his introduction to my godmother and the marriage, Cousin Fox had fallen in love with her, and became very bold in his attentions, and very desperate in his disappointment; and my grandfather got him a position in a commercial town, where he spent much money and led a wild life, and finally went into the army, and was considerably cooled off, or made a man of; for he was but a boy when he adored his grandmother and defied his grandfather.

All this my mother told me, and much more, during our drive to town on that eventful day. She described to me my christening, which took place when I was five years old, my grandfather and my new grandmother being my sponsors. She forewarned me that I would be adopted now by my godmother, and said, oracularly, "It rests with you whether you become a woman or a fine lady's lap-dog."

As I had never been in the habit of talking to my mother, I sat silent in the carriage, and pondered over my future until we reached my grandfather's residence.

The countless windows in the large house blazed a firelight welcome that I have never since been able to disconnect with death.

We met my Cousin Fox on the staircase: he was standing in the light of a roaring fire behind him,

the most gallant and noble figure I had ever seen. He embraced my mother, and took my hand. I felt at once warmed and protected.

In the chamber of death, as the housekeeper had respectfully called my grandfather's room, my godmother sat alone by her husband's bedside, looking fair and frail, and very much dressed for such an occasion. She was not to blame for that, however. The delicate tints of her complexion, the richness of her gown of green satin, and the fashion of the day to wear much lace, and her fair hair a little disordered, made her beautiful to look upon as she greeted us, with tears in her appealing eyes.

"He has been dying all the day," she said. "He likes me to be near him; he will not recognize you."

My Cousin Fox approached the bed, and took his hand.

"It is Fox," said my godmother. "You knew him yesterday; he has come to see you, my dear. And Mary and little Clara—don't you know them?"

My grandfather was sitting up in bed, supported by many pillows, and breathing strangely. He turned his eyes towards Cousin Fox when he took his hand, and there was a struggle in his face.

"You know Fox?" repeated my godmother.

"Certainly," he said, with an indefinite bow of the head, and with much difficulty. "Give Fox some supper, and Bur—Bur—Burgundy." Then he made an effort to smile; his powdered wig fell over his right eyebrow, which was very bushy and black—his smile, too, seemed to have slipped on one side—and his eyes rolled up in his head, as he said again, "Burgundy, Bur—gun—gundy for Fox, my dear;" and died, thinking kindly for another, as he had done when living.

My godmother straightened his wig, and Cousin Fox closed his eyes.

"I am very glad I was not alone," said she; and we left the room together.

Later in the night my mother and Cousin Fox went back to my dead grandfather, and I did not see them again till the next morning.

I drove to the funeral in the family coach, seated next to my godmother. I was present at the reading of the will, which left the estates and money equally divided between Cousin Fox and my godmother. My brothers and I were ultimately to inherit my godmother's portion, and a request was added that I should live at the homestead as the adopted child of Mrs. Howard Fox.

A large wardrobe of mourning clothes was made for me before I went home with my mother. I had a memorial ring; and in the spring I returned to my godmother, to live with her.

Cousin Fox had also a home at the old homestead, but he was still in the army, and we saw very little of him for two or three years. I watched for his visits as for the return of birds in spring, or flowers.

What is a godmother?

Of course I knew the Church acceptance of the word, and Cinderella's godmother, and a French fairy tale of a wicked old godmother; but what was mine to me—to me, a simple little country lass, transplanted to a vase in my lady's boudoir, expected

to bloom with the gaudy colours of the tulip, when I was at best but a wild flower?

At first, to me, my godmother was very much like Cinderella's. Touched with her wand, I lived in a succession of delights and surprises. The rats and pumpkins of this life were made luxuries and pleasures by her fairy hands. I was rolled through my duties in a glass coach. My tastes should be cultivated; I should not be a drudge; I should live a life enchanted!

Such was my godmother's amusement during her period of mourning—a distinct time in my memory, when my godmother wore black satin gowns, fine muslin folded meekly across her bosom, her hair covered but not concealed by a triangle of muslin, some bright locks escaping on her forehead as if they had bloomed there. We lived much in a small bright room, full of sunlight, my godmother at her embroidery frame, working with silk and wonderful floss of brilliant colours, gold thread and beads, and weaving for me beautiful stories of Penelope, Zenobia, Matilda of Flanders, and some maids of honour she had known in France.

I read the "Canterbury Tales" and the "Faërie Queene" and "Comus" aloud, not to my godmother alone, but to the sovereign heroines she had told me of, who were as real as the figures of her rich embroidery. The mignonette border was under the windows of our room, from the garden walk up to the house itself; and it was in bloom when I first saw Colonel Johnson, and first heard of Penelope's constancy and wifely cunning. Colonel Johnson trampled on the flowers of the mignonette as if they had been straw, and my godmother bent over her dazzling silks, but she was not taking out or putting in.

"Penelope," said this bold suitor in a red coat, "when this work shall be finished, what then?"

"Then I shall begin this pattern of Æneas and Dido."

That was all I heard; so, naturally, I asked about Penelope.

When my godmother began to admit the world a little, and to skirmish on the borders of society, she told me gravely that I must really begin to study, and make myself accomplished. I was thirteen—no longer a child. If I showed so little taste for study, perhaps it would be better to send me home for the summer; but my mother would be so shocked to find me so sad a trifter and so little improved. Perhaps the convent in France where she was educated would be the best place for me for a few years. I would have there no distractions. Nothing was in such bad taste as a forward child. Evidently the clock had struck twelve.

I went to my room, and contemplated sadly the change. While I was thinking profoundly as to how it would feel to have my wings pulled off, and thereafter to creep, I heard a noise—a delightful, cheering, hearty noise, nothing silken and fluttering about it.

I ran out of my room, and from the broad landing where the staircase separated I saw my godmother receive Cousin Fox. It was a thrilling picture in my eyes. He knelt on one knee, and kissed her hand. She, pathetic and tremulous, im-

printed a most decorous kiss on his bronzed forehead.

A friend of hers, Colonel Johnson, witnessed the scene; but he did not see though her dependent, pleading manner, as she said—

"You have come home this time to stay, Fox, haven't you? We need you sadly, Clara and I."

I gave a cry of delight, which made dear Cousin Fox run up the stairs to greet me.

"Oh, bad little girl, to grow so tall and maidenly!" he said; but hugged and kissed me as if I were yet a little child.

I took his kisses back into my room, and have kept them ever, as one keeps the scent of rose-leaves when the flower has gone. How gladly I accepted the old child place in his affections! I felt that I had a champion in him. My joy that he had come home was too full and flowing to be repressed.

Cousin Fox said that night at tea to my godmother—

"How pleasant it is to have this bright little bird twittering about the old house!"

And although it made me shy to be noticed so openly by a very tall British regular, I was very happy—happier and of more importance in my own eyes than I had ever been in my life.

It was the year of the peace of 1763. Cousin Fox resigned his commission, and made himself very busy in managing the property at home, and attending to the affairs of our late grandfather that had never been settled since his death. He was a man of fashion—a prince, I thought—and very interesting to my godmother, who used every sort of art she possessed to keep him always at home, and to add him to her list of knights; but all in vain. His manner to her was deferential and courteous to the highest degree—nothing more. He was never dazzled by her brilliancy, never piqued into anything beyond a scornful notice of her mode of life.

When he was at home, my godmother was very restless. Every day there were riding parties or pleasure parties to the houses of distant friends. Every night had its amusement: card parties, the theatre, routs, country dances—anything but a quiet evening at home. I reflected that this might be because, in public, my Cousin Fox was generally on duty upon my godmother; and often she made an occasion to tax his devotion, and enjoyed the interpretation that the world put upon his fidelity. Fickle and capricious, with no self-control, she often exposed her feelings to me, sometimes in confidence, more frequently because she disregarded me altogether. I was not a woman at thirteen. I had, I fear, accepted the lap-dog position of my mother's warning. When I looked well as an accompaniment, I was the companion of my godmother in her pleasure-seeking.

One day we went to the woods, a large party on horseback—a *fête* it was called. We spent a long, fretful, weary day. Our complexions and tempers were the worse for it in the evening. We entered the house on Cousin Fox's side, and stopped to rest in his den, which was seldom invaded by the female portion of the household. It was a little low room on the ground-floor, almost all hearth and fireplace,

the wainscoting of pine wood painted black. It was very attractive in winter when it was ablaze, but sombre in summer, and smelled of damp.

My godmother, standing on the red bricks of the hearth, her figure in relief against the black mantelpiece, and illumined by the light of candles, the green colour of her riding-dress heightened by the contrast with black and red, an unusual pensive expression in her face, seemed to be some one else for a moment—perhaps because I had never seen her in Cousin Fox's room before, and she may have been waiting for him to extend some hospitality to her.

He merely said, however, "You have to-day several times reminded me of the chaste goddess Diana—of the goddess of the chase, I mean, Mrs. Fox."

"Or of a chased goddess, you might mean," she answered. "I never had a harder time to keep off bores, and never a more unsuccessful. No thanks to you, my recreant grandson. Those Browns are not in our circle, Fox."

"I am glad to hear it."

"Nevertheless, how devoted you were to them! I thought you looked annoyed when I ventured to ask you to hold my stirrup."

"The third time, madame, or the fourth?"

"I don't remember. Do you wish me always to ride with a groom?"

"I have no wish on the subject."

"Then you were not annoyed? Why did you look so?"

"I was very much annoyed; indeed, I was enraged."

"Enraged because you must leave the Browns?"

"No; you mistake me. Birdie, did you have a nice day?"

"Fox, were you in a rage because I was troublesome?"

"Birdie, did you have a pleasant day?" said Cousin Fox.

"Birdie is too well-bred to interrupt your answer."

"I beg your pardon, madam. Will you excuse my answer?"

I could not bear to hear my godmother's taunting laugh. Therefore I left the room.

Soon my godmother followed me, and stood before a small oval mirror in my room, looking at herself with a smile of triumph. She kept her hair in braids close to her head that night, and wore a very simple muslin dress; but the Diana expression had been left in the den. Her sole ornament was a silver pomander attached to her girdle.

I wondered that I had never seen it before.

"What is it?" I asked. "A charm like a Canterbury brooch, godmother? Where did you get it? What a delicious, spicy fragrance!"

"Your Cousin Fox gave it to me before I married, child. It is a family relic. Your Uncle Fox gave it to his bride, and Fox gave it to me; but your grandfather did not exactly approve, and so you have not seen it."

Out of its perforations came to me something more than a spicy odour. Not by association, but by intuition and a sense of sympathy, I perceived the story it told.

Cousin Fox, in his young, mad devotion, had lavished upon her all his treasures—his love, his faith, his hope; this bauble that must have been sacred in his eyes, for it was his mother's, who had it from his father when he was a bachelor—all had been poured out upon her.

And why did she wear it now, and why the glittering, triumphant look in her eye? Cousin Fox had betrayed himself. He was hers again, as he had been when first he gave her his love and the silver pomander. I felt it before I heard his voice calling to her—

"Come down! Come down! I am hungry. Come!"

There was no one else in the world to him at that moment. The happiness in his voice made his words a love-song. He might as well have shouted—

"Come to me, my beloved! I am waiting and longing and hungering for you! Come! come!"

I ran down to him, and my godmother floated down a moment after. One glance that he gave her caused his blissful heart to overflow. He saw that she wore his lover's gift. He saw her downcast eyes, her sweet, girlish avoidance of his admiration. Much more he saw that lovers see; and all that lovers are blind to was hidden from him.

I ran out into the lonesome moonlight, to not hear his protestations and love-making, to not see my godmother enchant and enchain him, to not see his fetters fastened while he was at his devotions.

The very next day my godmother gave Cousin Fox an opportunity to tell me of his new happiness.

As I listened to his love-story I was awe-stricken—he told it with so much feeling and humility. He told me how desperate and reckless he had been when he lost her; that he was sure she would never look upon him as a man; that he had come home merely to protect her, and had never had a ray of hope until the night before, when some expression of despair escaping him had led to an explanation and an avowal.

"And godmother has been loving you all this time too?" I asked.

He whispered, "Yes." He believed it with all his heart.

"I thought it was Colonel Johnson," I said.

"I thought it was Colonel Johnson too," he answered quickly; "but she only pities him. He has been devoted to her so long, and is so mad a lover. Birdie," he added, after a silence, "we are only going to tell you of our engagement till Colonel Johnson goes abroad next month."

"Is my godmother afraid of him, then?"

"She would not hurt him unnecessarily," he said.

"Neither would I. He's a noble fellow."

"When he asks her to go away with him, will she not tell him then?"

"He will not ask her again, she is quite sure."

My godmother was a liar.

Even as we spoke, a faint shadow fell upon my cousin Fox's bliss, as we heard Colonel Johnson's horse's hoofs pawing the earth in front of the house. He came every day for a week, and was received by my godmother as before. At first Cousin Fox tried to be himself, hearty and generous; but that was useless. He grew pale at times when my godmother

yielded to Colonel Johnson's requests to ride with him, to walk with him, to sing to him—when she allowed him to linger hour after hour at her side, avowing that he could not tear himself away, now that his time was so short.

CHAPTER II.—THE COLONEL'S FORTUNE.

ON Colonel Johnson's last day, Cousin Fox shut himself in his den. His forbearance was spent. I heard him ask my godmother to ride with him, and she made some light excuse. She sat at her embroidery frame and watched for Colonel Johnson. He did not come till the evening.

Evidently it had not been arranged between them that he should not come. I had dared once during the day to go to Cousin Fox and tell him that Colonel Johnson was not with my godmother; but he only gave me a melancholy smile, and was not present at dinner. In the evening he made such a grand toilet that my godmother asked him if he were going to a ball.

He said, sadly, "No; I did not think my appearance would be noticed by you, madam."

Then in five minutes my godmother flattered him into something like content. She took up a pack of cards and offered to tell his fortune, running over an old form about a fair lady and a dark gentleman, and ruin, an enemy, jealousy, and so on. The words were nothing; but that she was near him, and trying once more to interest him, was everything.

Even after Colonel Johnson came in, and the doctor and another friend, she detained Cousin Fox at her side, and laughed and chatted with him, and made low replies to his admiring glances. I felt ashamed to see him so fast in her toils, and tried to entertain the doctor myself; but he was a grave man, and only came to the house to talk with Cousin Fox on serious subjects. Miss Harrison, my godmother's friend, made an equally ineffectual attempt to interest Colonel Johnson; but the thread of conversation was tangled, and in absurd knots.

I had never before seen my godmother unobservant of forms. She sat with her head upturned, listening to Cousin Fox, who, leaning over the back of her chair, murmured in her ear. The small table, on which were scattered the cards of Cousin Fox's interrupted fortune, was in front of her. To break the spell upon us all, I crossed the room, and gathered up the cards, with the vague intent to propose a game, or to attract my godmother's attention.

In the latter I succeeded. She turned from Cousin Fox, and, looking at Colonel Johnson, said, with a peculiarly distinct utterance—

"Don't touch the cards, Clara. I have laid them in combination to tell Colonel Johnson's fortune."

He, pretending that he had not heard her, came to the card table, and said, "I beg your pardon, madam," and seated himself; while Cousin Fox, like one awaking, walked away almost to the door of the room, and then, recollecting himself, turned, and sat down again.

My godmother, taking up the cards, and affecting to rearrange the combinations, said to Colonel Johnson—

"I thought you would never release me."

"You wished to be released, then?" he answered.

"Can you doubt it to-night?"

"I own that I was puzzled. I began to fear that I might be the dupe," he laughed.

Miss Harrison heard this, and, seeing me flushed and agitated, whispered, "What does it all mean, Clara?"

I could not speak the indignant words upon my lips. I only shook my head. We listened to Colonel Johnson's fortune without any attempt to talk. I can hardly call it listening on my part, however. I was burning with the desire to rise up and expose my godmother—to call her base, deceitful, treacherous. But what had she done? She had but talked pleasantly to Cousin Fox, whose wife she was soon to be, and listened to him on Colonel Johnson's last night. That was all!

It is only the siren's sweet, low voice that is heard. Then follows the shipwreck, apparently at the hands of those who perish; and the song goes on. I aroused myself with an effort to listen.

"Your voyage will be a very happy one, very. You will be married before you sail; no—the beloved object will be your companion." Then, putting down the knave of diamonds, "This selfish and deceitful relative, fair and false"—ten of diamonds—"will strip you of your money; a widow of malicious disposition, dark complexion; card of caution, followed by the deuce of clubs, which means unexpected wealth; domestic troubles; jealousy; the very fair woman arises; scandal; nine of hearts, the wish-card. You must wish."

"I have nothing to wish for," he said.

"Question!" said my godmother. "How?"

"Must not the cards answer all questions?"

"Yes; ace—death; malice; a duel; misfortune. You will find your horoscope in the first thing that is given to you; mark that. Card of importance—fatal hour, midnight, or, when the moon rises; observe the reflections in the river, near the bridge, at this hour. Here your fate is a little obscured; but all will end well if you read your horoscope by moonlight at the bridge."

My godmother, looking at me, dropped the cards with—

"Enough nonsense on your last night, Colonel Johnson."

"Away with melancholy!" he said, and tried to be jocose with me, affecting to believe that I was silent and sad because we would soon be separated.

The doctor had said good-night, and Cousin Fox was talking to him in the hall. Miss Harrison bade Colonel Johnson good-bye, and hoped his fortune would be a good one, wherever he might be. I went into the hall with her to put on her shawl. Cousin Fox said to her, "I'll come back in a moment," and walked out with the doctor under the trees.

Miss Harrison said, "There's some important news about taxing the colonies. I suppose I shall be kept here half the night."

She looked through the open door at my godmother, whose back was turned to us, and shrugged her shoulders significantly.

Colonel Johnson was talking to her earnestly, leaning over the card-table. On seeing Miss Harrison's gesture, he rose suddenly, and attached to

the ribbon of his watch was my godmother's silver pomander.

She stretched out her hand for it, laughing; but implored him in a low tone to hide it.

"Fox will be angry," she said. "Quickly, pray, put it in your pocket."

"Fox does not care about silver toys," he said; but covered it with his arm, as Cousin Fox entered the hall.

He brushed by Miss Harrison and me, went into the drawing-room, and walking up to Colonel Johnson, stared at him silently. Colonel Johnson returned his stare.

"I have been watching you from outside, sir. Explain yourself."

"I was just saying that you did not care about silver toys, my dear fellow; that's all."

"I demand an explanation, Colonel Johnson."

"I refuse an explanation, Major Fox. You will find me in your den when you return."

Cousin Fox bowed to Colonel Johnson and then to Miss Harrison, to signify that he waited her pleasure; and not a word was spoken until the door closed upon them.

I went into the drawing-room, to implore my godmother to make Colonel Johnson leave the house before Cousin Fox came back; but I could not speak when I saw her smiling as if nothing had happened. Colonel Johnson, looking out of a window, said, with a yawn—

"Really, I do not wish to kill Fox as my last act. What shall I do?"

"Of course you must not kill Fox," said my godmother, gathering up the cards. "Silly fellow! I will explain to him that there are two pomanders. Clara, run and fetch mine from my casket, or in my India cabinet."

"This is yours with the sharper points, madam."

"Never mind; fetch the other one quickly."

I understood it all as I ran upstairs to her room. My godmother had detached from her girdle during the fortune-telling her pomander, and had given it to Colonel Johnson. It contained, probably, some false farewell verses, which she called a horoscope, and he would read them at the bridge when the moon rose. For this last folly Cousin Fox might lose his life.

The pomander that I found in her casket belonged to Colonel Johnson. They were so alike in shape, size, and workmanship that my godmother did not know one from the other. I hoped to confuse my Cousin Fox. I hoped that he had not seen that my godmother wore hers during the evening. I did not know exactly what my hope was; but I did not stop to breathe until I reached Cousin Fox's den with the pomander in my hand.

His candles had burned so low that I could hardly see when I entered it. I was afraid of hearing another heart beat beside my own in the stillness; and when I found that I was alone, it was agony to wait, for Colonel Johnson might come before Cousin Fox; but the outer door opened, and Cousin Fox came in, starting at the sight of me.

"Birdie, what do you want in my den so late at night?" he said. "Your little head ought to be under your wing."

"Cousin Fox, it was only a joke all the time. My godmother sent me to her casket to fetch her pomander, and here it is. I brought it to you first, because I was afraid it might be too late, and that I'd find you and Colonel Johnson killing one another. I'll take it to her now, as she bade me, shall I?"

"Wait, child. Where did you get that thing? Tell me the truth."

"Out of my godmother's casket in her room, on my word."

"And this is what they call a joke?"

"My godmother said that Colonel Johnson must not kill you, and told me to go upstairs for hers, and said she would explain to you that there were two."

"Did she? The joke shall be carried out to the end, though."

"It shall not—it shall not!" I screamed, and sprang upon him, and clung to his arms as he took down some swords from the wall.

I stamped my feet, and made him turn to me.

"Don't murder anybody! Oh, dear, dear Cousin Fox, you'll be killed yourself!"

"Birdie, it must be," he said, sadly; "but I shall not kill Colonel Johnson."

"Then you'll be killed yourself," I cried; "and I will kill him with my own hands first. Oh, pray, pray listen to me for one minute!"

"Don't be foolish, Birdie."

He took me in his arms to soothe me. I clung to him, and whispered all the love I had ever had for him, and my despair. Colonel Johnson came in and found me with my arms around his neck, sobbing, and begging him not to fight a wicked duel.

I think he, too, had made up his mind that the foolish affair must take place, although he did not wish it; but when he saw my tears, and heard my cousin's broken voice trying to console me, and begging me to go now to my godmother, like a good child, he took the pomander from his watch-ribbon, and gave it to me, saying—

"Don't cry, little one. I don't want the bauble. I'll give it to you."

My cousin glared at him with a wild-beast look, and I let the pomander fall on the floor. It opened, and I saw that there was no horoscope in it. My godmother had undoubtedly taken it out. Whatever of importance she had to say to Colonel Johnson had been said. I thought she must have made him promise that he would not go to Cousin Fox, and that she was then waiting for me to come to her with the pomander from her casket, and for Cousin Fox to come to her for an explanation, and that she expected to caress and smile away this misunderstanding as she had so many others. I thought this and much more, and heard at the same time Colonel Johnson say—

"Fox, we'll fight if you insist upon it, but the child has explained for me. What shall it be about next? Would you kill me for wearing my own pomander?"

"No. You know it is not that."

"For what, then?"

"If you were not going away for ever I would kill you or be killed in the attempt, and give you no reason for fighting," said Cousin Fox, rising and putting me from him.

"But as I am going away now for ever, Fox, you will not give me a parting stab. I confess I am very glad to shake hands with you instead."

He put out his hand.

Cousin Fox shook it heartily, and said—

"May I never see you again! Good-bye."

He closed the door upon Colonel Johnson, and said to me—

"Birdie, I thought he was violent and fiery. There's something wrong. I should not have let him off."

He stooped and picked up the open pomander, and, raising a window, threw it after Colonel Johnson with all his might.

I felt that the thing of evil omen would bring him back; but it was my godmother who entered at the outer door, with a deep scratch on her cheek, making a long blood line.

"Some one has hit me with a sharp stone," she said. "Clara, what are you doing here?"

"Probably it was Colonel Johnson's pomander that I flung after him. I beg your pardon, madam. I could not know that you were outside."

"I was afraid you might kill each other," she said, with indescribable sweetness.

"We found that we had nothing to fight about."

"I wish you had sent me word. I would not have wet my feet in the grass."

She lingered as she crossed the room to the passage leading into the house, but Cousin Fox did not look at her again. When she had gone, he threw out his arms with a groan, and said—

"I have lost her for ever—for ever, oh, Birdie!"

He fell into a seat like a wounded man, and covered his face with his hands. I was nothing to him then. I left the room, closing the door on his misery; but, as if his heart were really bleeding, a long trail of anguish seemed to follow me, and when I fell asleep I dreamed that he was in a pit so deep that I could not see him, but could hear faint cries. I was listening in my dreams when the housekeeper awoke me.

"Major Fox says your godmother has gone last night with Colonel Johnson, miss. He's very bad himself. I think he is gone mad, almost, he's so angry," she said.

I sprang up.

"Where is he?" I said.

"Gone to the stables now, miss. He's just come home on horseback; his looks is awful. Let me help you on with your clothes."

The old woman dressed me quickly; her hands did not shake as mine did. She observed that "Mrs. Fox's ways had never done honour to the family," and then relapsed into her accustomed dignified silence.

The whole house was open and deserted as I crossed the main building to Cousin Fox's den, where I hoped to find him. I opened his door with trembling fingers; but I was not prepared for such a sad, pitiable object as he appeared, seated on a low bench, his dress disordered and muddy, his face haggard and grey, his look so wild that I hardly knew him. I staggered forward, and sat down on the floor. He gave a horrid laugh, and beat his bench with his fists.

"Get up and come to me, Birdie," he said; "don't mind me and that woman, your godmother. Are you afraid of me? You are afraid of me. Why didn't you let me kill him, then, last night? But I tracked him. I followed her to the bridge. She wet



her feet again last night going after him. I told her I was sorry that she had wet her feet, and I put her in his carriage, Birdie, and congratulated him and her. She wanted to see her old father, she said, and



would avail herself of Colonel Johnson's escort. Can't you get up?"

He looked at me, and stopped beating on the bench; and smiled such a hopeless, vacant smile, I

thought him mad, and knelt and prayed that his reason might not be gone for ever.

He was quite still as I prayed, and when I stopped, he came to me, and lifting me, said—

"Birdie, go away from this house: you are fair



too. Send for your mother to take you away before it is too late, and be a good girl."

The worst was over.

I made Cousin Fox go for my mother the next day. She came and stayed with him until we were



quite sure that his mind was not affected. He might have become a misanthrope or a woman-hater, but that he lived in troublous times and was a thorough man. He tried his best to lose his life in fighting

his country's battles, and in so doing learned that his life was not in his own hands. He sought my mother and me to give us his protection during the war, established us in the homestead, and, when peace was proclaimed, came home to us a poor soldier, with a bullet in his side; but the sadder wound was healed.

And my godmother's pomander? It is that which has brought before me, long years after, the old days.

I sit with my spinster knitting in the old doorway of the den. Cousin Fox is turning up the earth around some old apple-trees. His little boy comes running to me with a round ball in his hand.

"I fink it is a wasps' nest?" he says, inquiringly.

"No, it is not a wasps' nest," I answer, digging away incrustations of dirt with my needle.

"I fink, maybe, it is the fink what made the hole in papa?"

I hold it up to Cousin Fox, and we smile together as he says—

"Yes, my son, it is the fink that made the bad hole in me."

I have brought it to my old little room and cleaned it. There is no fragrance from it now, except the mouldy smell of graves. I put it in my godmother's casket with this brief story.

Fiji Dancers.

IT was amusing in the morning to watch the country people streaming into the town in large and small parties—in canoes or along the paths on the banks of the river. They had their smart dancing dresses tied up in bundles, some with their faces already painted, and their hair done up in tappa in the oddest way possible. All the time the "lalis" (native wooden drums) were making a great row in the square, and when all the people were assembled we went and sat down under a canopy of mats which had been put up to screen us from the sun.

First came the school children. They passed us in single file, and, passing inside the advancing file, coiled themselves up in the centre of the square. Each child, as it passed, halted and read a verse from the Bible. Then they unwound themselves, and came up in the same fashion with their writing on slates.

Then came a dance on the "meke." They retired a little, divided into bands, and then came forward in a sort of dance, turning first to one side and then the other, moving in the most perfect time, and chanting as they came. All their movements were graceful, and the way in which the tune, if one can so call it, was first of all sung by those in front, and then taken up, a third lower, by those behind, was very effective. If I have time I will translate the "meke" for you. It was "composed for the occasion."

When they had come close enough, on a signal they all sat down and began a geography lesson. The native teacher called out the name of a country, as "Peritania" (Britain), and one of the children, in a low minor key, began to chaunt "Peritania sa matanitu" (Britain is a kingdom). Then, a third higher, some other words, saying where Britain is,

&c.; and then, with a swaying motion of their bodies and a rythmical clapping of hands, sometimes beating the ground, sometimes pointing on one side, sometimes the other, and sometimes joining hands overhead, they all joined in a chaunt descriptive of the extent, government, &c., of the British Empire; in fact, school geography turned into rather a pretty song. In this way they went through nearly all the countries in Europe. After which, and singing "God Save the Queen" in English, exeunt the school children, dancing.

Then came the event of the day, the great state "meke." The first was the Flying Fox Dance. From the half-hidden roads leading out of the corners of the square came two bands of men dressed in likus (a sort of kilt) of green and coloured leaves. These were beautifully made, the leaves lying very thick one above another, and reaching below their knees. The men were very fine specimens of humanity; some had their faces blackened, or painted black and red, and their heads done up in the most elaborate way with white tappa. Garlands of flowers and leaves hung round their necks, and they had garters and armlets of bright-coloured leaves on their arms and legs.

To describe the dance is far beyond my power. There must have been over two hundred men and about sixty children taking part in it. The two parties approached each other in the usual "meke" form—an odd mixture of march and dance; and after various evolutions, every man threw away the huge palm leaf fan which he carried in his hand. This was the end of the first act.

In the next part the flying foxes proceeded to rob a banana tree. A pole was set up in the middle of the square, and on the top of it a banana plant, with a bunch of artificial fruit made of husked cocoanuts full of oil. The two bands advanced, and seemed to consult, and then messengers were sent out from either party, to see, I suppose, that all was safe. They went flying round the square with their arms stretched out, making a noise like a flying fox. With a great deal of dancing the main body approached the tree, and one of them climbed up, whilst the little flying foxes circled round, and finally clustered under the tree, crying with delight at the sight of the fruit. The fox in the tree hung by his legs and flapped his arms, when another climbed after him, and they bit and scratched and squalled, just as big bats do, and the first comer was turned out.

The whole dance lasted about half an hour, and between each figure there was a slight pause. The time was wonderful—every swish of their likus was in unison, and they were most clever in adapting themselves to any inequality in the ground. There was a musical accompaniment of native drums and hollow bamboos, played by about twenty gaily-dressed old gentlemen.

Next came a Club Dance. The square was surrounded—except on one side, where stood the great church—as I ought before to have mentioned, by plantations of bananas and bread-fruit; so that one saw nothing of the preparations and formation, and heard the chaunt of the dancers before they came in from the different paths. From either side ad-

vanced a party, each about eighty strong, marching three abreast, armed with short spears made of bamboo, cut into fantastic shapes at the end, or with the shafts painted or covered with a matting of reeds. As the two parties approached each other—very, very slowly—they chaunted, and swung their bodies from side to side, thrusting and parrying with their spears, which were held overhead; every hand and every foot moving exactly together. When about twelve yards from each other, each body wheeled away from us, and we saw advancing between them from some distance another body of men, of about the same strength as both the others, but twelve abreast, and armed with clubs. This “meke,” in which over three hundred men were dancing, was wild and picturesque, and the men fine, well-made fellows, as they were all chiefs or men of high birth. The dresses in this dance were even more brilliant than in the last. Each man had a liku of strips of pandanus leaf, dyed black, yellow, and red in strips. Their bodies and faces were elaborately painted black and red, and their heads were done up in folds of very fine tappa, white or brown, or in some cases (what I had never seen before) of a bright blue. They had sashes of white tappa, in thick folds, terminating sometimes in streamers, and sometimes in a long train, not allowed to touch the ground, but looped up again into the sash, something like the things ladies used to wear a little while ago. Each man in the front rank of the larger body had a splendid large breast-plate of ivory and pearl-shell. Many had a large boar’s tooth hung round their necks—rather an effective ornament—and armlets, garters, and bracelets of shells, ivory, or black waterweed, according to his fancy.

The next dance was the most graceful of all. It was called the Waves of the Sea, and represented the sea coming up on the reef. The dresses of the men were much the same as in the last; but there was also a number of children in bright likus, and with garlands of leaves and flowers. First of all, they formed into a long line; then, breaking the line, danced forward, ten or twelve at a time, for a few steps, bending down their bodies and spreading out their hands, as the little shoots from a wave run up on the beach. Then wave after wave rolled in, and then at the end of the long line ran round, first, a few at a time, some falling back again; then more and more, as the tide runs up on the shore-side of the reef, and nothing but a small island of coral is left. The band kept up a sound like the roar of the surf; and as the tides rose and the waves began to meet and battle over the little island, the dancers threw their arms over their heads as they met, and their white tappa-covered heads shook as they bounded into the air, like the spray of the breaking surf. The people sitting round screamed with delight. The idea of the dance could not have been more artistically carried out.

THE GOLDEN EAGLE.—This bird is so destructive to lambs, young deer, kids, hares, poultry, &c., in the Orkney Islands, that in order to extirpate them there is a law which entitles any person who kills one to a hen out of every house in the parish in which the plunderer is killed.

Dials and Weathercocks.

THE linguistic parent—some would less affectedly call it “root”—of our modern words “vane” and “fan” seems naturally to be the Latin *vannus*, a winnowing instrument, named by Virgil and Columella; although some, indeed, have gone back to the Greek. The French Academicians introduced *van* into their dictionary in about 1680; the verb active *vanner* they define “to winnow.” In the Provençal lexicon, *vana* appears as the form of the substantive before the fifteenth century. According to Dr. Johnson, the “van—a wide-spread thing by which the wind is raised”—comes from the Latin *vannus*, while “vane”—a plate hung on a pin to turn with the wind—he traces no farther than the *vaene* of the Dutch. The translators of our Gospels have used “fan” for “van” or “vane” in Luke iii. 17. “Whose fan is in his hand; and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner, but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.” In Isaiah we read of “clean provender winnowed with the fan;” and again, in the same book, anticipating, as it were, the art of the modern machinist, the prophet says—“I will make thee a new threshing instrument having teeth, . . . and thou shalt thresh them (*the mountains*) . . . thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them.” Shakspeare speaks of “a vane blown by all winds.” Milton sings—

“His sail-broad vans
He spreads for flight, and in the surging smoke
Uplifted spurns the ground.”

In the library at Lambeth is a religious tract, dated 1578, entitled “The Fanne of the Faithful.” It appears, then, that in the mediæval confusion of tongues, the functions of the wind-raising and the wind-moved instruments came to be expressed by words of identical origin; the French Academy, in fact, attribute to their word *eventail* the meanings of our “fan” and “vane” also.

Having treated, or, as the case may be, bored the reader with a trifle of preludial etymology, let us proceed to a few remarks on the vane of the period. The large majority of those used on London buildings are designed in the form of arrows. St. Paul’s Cathedral, as we all know, has none. The Mansion House is no better off. The central Guildhall vane represents a flag bearing the City shield, and is in keeping with the building. On the adjacent church of St. Lawrence Jewry the vane is a gridiron, in allusion to the fate of the saint. On the Royal Exchange, the vane or weathercock—for the public insist upon confounding the terms—is the famous grasshopper cognizance of brave old Thomas Gresham. The parishioners of St. Swithin’s, London Stone, rejoice in a first-class specimen. The oldest parish church, St. Peter’s, Cornhill, brandishes aloft in upper air a monster key, emblem of its patron saint. From the lofty summit of Bow Church a huge dragon threatens the ward of Cheap and Mr. Alderman Nottage. On the church of Queenhithe in Huggin-lane we find a much more aspiring design—a ship in full sail. Another of

these ornaments is the elegant turret at the shop of Messrs. Mappin and Webb and the corner of the Poultry. Yet another ship, which had flourished, it may be, since the fire of London, was conspicuous, till two years ago, on the church of St. Mildred in the Poultry; but the church is now no more, and the ship has been transferred to the church of St. Olave's Jewry, in Coleman-street Ward. Our peripatetic *collaborateur* informs us that diligent observation at the Post Office failed to detect a vane, while on each of the four new finials of St. Sepulchre's Church is a handsomely planned and wrought one. He thinks, too, that, while we are on the subject, it were pity and shame to overlook the valuable wind-dials provided for public use by Mr. Benson in Ludgate-hill and Mr. Dent in the Strand. There may be even more of such benefactors than he recollects. In the course of his survey he seemed quite refreshed to report of them, for his soul was weary of flags and arrows; and the true weathercock on the Temple Church, the noble "lamb and flag" on the Middle Temple library, and the handsome winged horse which does duty hard by on the summit of the new library clock tower, put him quite in spirits for a fresh cruise.

As we are weary of arrows and tongues of flames, and refuse to admit crows to be either vanes or weathercocks (the multitude, as we have said, consider the latter term the generic one), a western survey produced little enough to chronicle. The lofty vane of St. Clement Danes is conventional, but of imposing bulk. On St. Mary-le-Strand is a spur. At Mr. Stanford's, at Charing-cross, is a splendid specimen of the "vane-flory," richly gilt. The lofty spire at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields is surmounted by a noble specimen of the orthodox vane, standing on a globe and surmounted by a crown, the whole thoroughly becoming on a royal parish church. The large and conspicuous bat used by J. Wilson and Co., of Cranbourn-street, helps to give prominence to their cricketering warehouse. The Government offices in Whitehall make no show whatever. On the Admiralty may be noticed a rather contemptible "burgee." The architects of St. Stephen's have hung out their little Gothic banners on the outward wall in all directions; while at the new Winter Garden the designer, allowing his fancy a little play, has pressed the Hippocampus into the service, and made a "weathercock" of him. At a tower in connection with Mr. Hankey's unornamental, if useful, pile at Queen Anne's-gate, and at No. 36 in the square, were observed good specimens, and we finished our western notes with the very large arrow-vane on the church of St. James, Piccadilly. But the *pièce de résistance* must at length appear in its proper place in the banquet; so let us guide the reader, not as Chaucer sings, "by heath andholt," but along tortuous lanes and through a maze of shafts and spires, to the last municipal ornament of London—the great central Poultry Market in Smithfield.

When an edition of Mr. Laureate Tennyson's poems was published—it was in 1851, and how long ago it seems!—that worthy bard, the courteous reader will probably remember, took occasion to immortalize a certain gilt and graven image of a cock that to this day staggers over the sawdusted

entry of an old Fleet-street tavern, as if he had been making a little too free inside. The "reeling ripe" Will Waterproof threw a halo round that bird which should ensure for his wooden feathers, when some future ædiles shall have decreed the widening of Fleet-street and his fall, a peaceful, rainless, well-watched future at South Kensington. For all we know, Sir Henry Cole may have his discriminating eye upon him even now, and 'twere well 'twere so; for, when the time is come, the bric-à-brac hunters, especially those of the Waterproof family so pleasantly alluded to in the monody, will mark him for their own to a certainty. This is the picture Will drew:—

"The cock was of a larger egg
Than modern poultry drop,
Stept forward on a firmer leg,
And crammed a plumper crop;
Upon an ampler dung-hill stood,
Crow'd lustier, late and early,
Sipped wine from silver, praising God,
And raked in golden barley."

And when, having lit upon the "pottle-bodied boy" who was afterwards to "become head waiter," he

"Flew over roof and casement,
His brothers of the weather stood
Stock-still for sheer amazement."

Must we say it—we have lived to see that bird, if not "wiped out," at all events sunk into abatement and low price; for on the four massive corner towers—no turrets these—of the City Poultry Market, the able and genial architect to the Corporation, Mr. Horace Jones, has mounted, with most humorous fitness, four weathercocks, compared to whom the time-honoured bird of Fleet-street is a mere bantam dwarf.

Mr. Jones has clearly an eye for a smart finish to his buildings, for one of the handsomest vanes in the metropolis has for a long time decorated the electric telegraph building erected from his designs in Threadneedle-street some twenty years ago. Messrs. Benham and Froud, of Chandos-street, St. Martin's-lane, the manufacturers of these "fearful fowls" (as Bully Bottom mal-appropriately termed the lion), have been so good as to furnish us with one or two particulars about them. Each of them is four feet six inches high, and four feet from bill to tail, and stands upon a globe, like himself, of copper and hollow. The shafts are thirteen feet long to the cocks' combs; the arms of the vane six feet across. These weathercocks paramount—or "cocks of the weather walk"—for so, if we mistake not, we fairly term them—have all the bold defiant look of their race, and we have welcomed them with such gushing cordiality as fine specimens of the older form of vane, which has of late years been extensively applied to country houses and churches, but, as has appeared above, only sparsely in town. We fancy their permanence may be relied upon, in spite of their large exposed surface, their constructors having (under Mr. Cock-erell) made and fixed the present ball and cross of St. Paul's, which have maintained their elevated position (and stood rough usage, too, one would think, in the time of the survey) since 1822.

We should not conclude our remarks without a vote of thanks to these gentlemen, and to Messrs. Hart, Son, and Peard, of Wych-street and Brook-street, Hanover-square (makers of the true weather-cock in the Temple, and of many another in the shires), who were kind enough to place instructive sheets of drawings at our service.

The Mortimers of ——— ?

I FRANKLY admit that I am a little reserved with strangers, and possess my fair share of that false pride, the inheritance of all true Englishmen. This being the case, I resented his interference. We were both standing at the ticket bureau, at the Cologne Railway Station, and I was vainly attempting to make myself understood by a more than usually stupid German official. He interfered on my behalf, and soon obtained for me the information I desired.

"They are very silly, here," he observed, with a smile; "it's very awkward when you don't understand the language. They all pretend to speak French; but since Sedan they have voted *la grande nation* low, and snub any one who is not equal to Dutch."

I thanked him coldly, and hurried off to my carriage. When I was seated comfortably in my wraps and was preparing to digest the last new nove, (Tauchnitz edition), I felt that I had not been particularly gracious. I was dissatisfied with myself. He had gone out of his way to be civil to me, and I had treated him with studied coldness; nay, more, with unstudied contempt. I found myself blushing for my own conduct. The more I thought about him the greater was the increase of my shame. I had behaved badly—injudiciously. Really, he seemed to be a very presentable man. To the best of my recollection, I had never seen him before; but still there was something about him very *distingué*. Who was he?

I laid down my paper-covered book, and pondered. He was neat and trim, with a short moustache and military whiskers. He was not a young man, and yet he walked the ground with all the elasticity of youth. Was he a major on half-pay? Scarcely; although he was smart and natty, he lacked that "something"—the characteristic of men who have served with the colours. Was he a barrister? No, he was too unaffected. A doctor? No; I could not give a reason, but I felt he was not a doctor. Who was he, then?

As I thought over the matter, the guard opened the carriage-door, thrust into the compartment an unintelligent German head, withdrew it, and ushered in three ladies and a gentleman. I looked up, and found facing me the unknown and his family. He nodded to me as he sat down.

"You see, we are to be fellow-travellers—fate has decided, and we must submit."

I felt half inclined to resent his familiarity, but a glance at his companions caused me to give up any idea of the sort in course of formation.

"My wife and daughters," said he, with a wave of the hand.

Certainly, the young ladies were very beautiful.

They were charmingly dressed in the latest fashion. Blue eyes, golden hair, and lovely complexions. They reminded me of poor Leech's maidens. As for their mother, she was portly and jewelled. The daughters looked at me amiably and smiled.

"We are going to Heidelberg," continued the unknown. "We shall stay there for a fortnight, and then trot on to Baden-Baden. Where are you going?"

His brisk manner put me out of countenance. Good gracious! here was a perfect stranger asking me where I was going? I was never so much surprised in all my life.

"If you are going to Heidelberg, and don't know the place," he continued, "let me advise you to put up at the Hôtel de l'Europe. That's where we are going."

I glanced at the younger of the young ladies, and murmured that I had made up my mind to go to the Hôtel de l'Europe during my stay at Heidelberg. As a matter of fact, when I entered the carriage, I had booked myself for Bâle, with a view to dropping gently into Italy *via* Switzerland. However, as I was an idle man, there existed no reason why I should not alter my arrangements, and follow the unknown to Heidelberg. So I changed my plans, and made up my mind to enjoy the view of the Castle for an indefinite period.

"I am glad to hear you say that. I am always glad to meet an Englishman abroad, because he reminds me of home. After all, there is no place like England."

And my new friend lolled back in his seat, and gazed complacently upon the glorious beauties of the Rhine.

"Look at that river," said he. "Of course it's very fine, and all that; but the castles are in a disgraceful state of repair. Why, there's not one of them fit for habitation by a dog! Supposing we were to let Bayswater fall into ruins!"

"Don't think of such an awful thing!" replied his wife. "Why, Henry, you make me shudder!"

"Or Pall Mall," he continued. "Why, sir," and he turned to me, "it would be the ruin of trade."

I agreed with him, and the conversation became general. During our long and tedious journey, I had ample opportunities for testing the conversational powers of my fellow-travellers. Mr. Mortimer (he soon told me his name) was one of the best-read men I have ever met. He spoke three languages fluently, and seemed equally at home while discussing Chinese politics, or when talking about the weather. His wife was solemn and silent. His daughters were average young women, with plenty of smiles and not a few blushes. They seemed to be perfectly at their ease, and interrupted their father whenever they thought fit to do so. There was a freshness about the family which pleased me mightily, and I was heartily glad to have made their acquaintance. I stayed up talking to them for hours after we reached Heidelberg, and was quite worn-out when I sought the white sheets and plum-pudding mattress of my bed in the Hôtel de l'Europe.

The next morning, as I made my toilet, I could not help speculating once more upon their social position. They seemed to be well up in the peerage,

and yet I did not remember having ever seen them before. Now I go about a good deal in society, and know everybody who is anybody; and yet I did not know them. Consequently, who were they? I asked them where they related at all to the Mortimers of So-and-so, or to the Mortimers of Such-and-such a place? They answered in *both* instances, "Yes, we are slightly connected;" which, to say the least, was strange. Everybody knows, I need scarcely add, the Such-a-place Mortimers are quite a distinct family from the Mortimers of So-and-so. However, my Mortimers might prove to be the missing link. I regretted I had not brought my "Burke" in my portmanteau. It would have been weighty, but useful.

After breakfast, we of course strolled up to the Castle, and enjoyed the view from the hill.

"Fine old place!" exclaimed Mr. Mortimer. "Look; there are the English arms—evidently a compliment to the Elector's wife."

This led up to a long chat upon old families and heraldic coats. As we were descending into Heidelberg, I asked Mr. Mortimer for the name of his county.

"Oh," said he, "we are so old a family that we have no county. We were on the soil before the Norman conquest."

"And your crest?" I asked, with some hesitation.

"Oh, such a pretty one!" said Miss Mary Mortimer, the younger and nicer of the two girls; "look, here it is on my locket."

I stooped down with a smile, and the colour came into my cheeks as my face came near to hers. She, too, was embarrassed. Our eyes met for a moment, and then I hastily lowered mine to gaze at the locket. Good gracious!—I started back.

The crest of the old—old Mortimers was a *steam-engine*.

I had not time to answer her question about the "prettiness" of the badge before I saw approaching us from the bottom of the hill one of my London acquaintances, old Lady Paddington. Now, as her ladyship is a very particular old woman, I felt a little shy of meeting her in the company of my new friends. The locomotive had not assisted me very materially in the identification of the Mortimers. I was somewhat relieved to find Lady Paddington returning graciously my friend's rather exaggerated bow. However, my satisfaction was soon changed to chagrin when I encountered her ladyship's stare of blank surprise and disgust. She took no notice of my polite recognition, but passed on without a word or a nod. In fact, she cut me dead! Good gracious, what *had* I done to deserve this?

I am a particular man, and this *contretemps* put me quite out of conceit with myself. Heidelberg became particularly distasteful to me, and I longed to quit it for some lonely spot on the Italian lakes, where I might forget the insult so cruelly inflicted upon me. I made my excuses to the Mortimers next day, and informed them that I was obliged to leave the place at once. Mary seemed a little disappointed.

"Well, sir," said her father, "we shall be sorry to lose your society, but an Englishman has a right to

do what he pleases. However, if you *must* leave us, I trust we shall see you in town."

After this, what could I do but exchange cards? And thus we parted.

It is unnecessary to give an account of my peregrinations. I strolled from country to country until, thoroughly surfeited of the Continent and bored with my own society, I once more turned my portmanteau towards home. When I had made myself comfortable in my cheerful rooms in St. James's-square, I opened the letters that had accumulated during my absence. There were the usual number of circulars, and rather more than the usual number of bills; a few notes asking me to dinner, and an invitation to a dance at the Mortimers'. As the last had only arrived a couple of days before, it was in my power to answer. I thought of Mary Mortimer, and accepted the invitation.

On the night of the ball I duly presented myself at the Mortimerian mansion. The cabman stared rather when I gave him the address—somewhere beyond Islington. However, when we arrived at our destination, we found a very magnificent establishment. The only fault in the *ménage* was this—everything seemed to be overdone. There were too many footmen, and too much velvet on the footmen's liveries. The band was too loud and too numerous, the rooms too well lighted, the women too well dressed. The dowagers wore too many jewels, the girls were too much in the fashion. Leaving this out of the question, the dance was far from bad. With the exception of the Mortimers, I did not know a soul in the room. However, the men seemed to be presentable enough, and the women waltzed admirably. Here and there I saw excessively vulgar-looking men, but these people were the exception to the rule.

Mr. Mortimer was particularly civil, and his daughters exceedingly gracious. I danced nearly every dance, and that is a great thing for me, and proves to me that I must have been amused. As a rule, I am not a dancing man.

I left the place at a late hour in the morning, after having promised to look Mr. Mortimer up in his place in Pall Mall South. During the next few days I had so much to do that I was unable to keep my promise. However, later in the week, finding myself in the neighbourhood of Pall Mall South, I determined upon calling upon my host. I had some difficulty in finding the number, and when I succeeded I found that the place was a shop. "Ah!" I thought, "my friend has rooms over this place." I knocked at the private door, and was referred by the servant to the people in the shop. She knew of no Mr. Mortimer. Rather annoyed at my failure, I took her hint. Can you judge of my surprise, my dismay, my total extinction, when I tell you that behind the counter, *in an apron*, stood my host, Mr. Mortimer!

He was not a bit abashed, but held out his hand over some candles, and grasped my reluctant palm with effusion.

"Glad to see you," said he. "I hope you have recovered from the effects of the other evening."

Then leading the way to the shop parlour, he offered me a chair.

"You are surprised to see me with an apron tied

round my waist," said he, noticing the blank stare of astonishment depicted on my countenance.

I murmured something, I know not what.

"Well," he continued, "I can see nothing particularly degrading in trade. I don't adulterate the articles I sell over yonder, and I charge a fair percentage. My customers are good enough to patronize me largely, much to the benefit of myself and my family. I have one son in the Church, another in the Army, and a third reading for the Bar. My father was an errand-boy, and for all I know to the contrary my great-grandson may be the parent of a peer. I pay rates and taxes, and do my duty as well as I can in that walk of life to which I have been called by a merciful Providence. What do you say to that?"

I really do not know what I did say at the moment, for I was slightly confused. However, I felt then, and still feel, that my friend Mortimer (he is an old friend now) was merely the type of an ordinary Englishman.

A Fight with a Polecat.

THE following is a naturalist's own description of an encounter he had one night with a polecat, which, driven away repeatedly, returned again and again to the attack, the attraction being a moorhen he had recently shot, and which was in his breast-pocket. Having buttoned up his coat to the chin, to prevent the bird being taken away by force, he thus gives the result:—

"I lay as still as death; but, being forced to breathe, the movement of my chest made the brute raise his head, and at that moment I gripped him by the throat. I sprang instantly to my feet, and held on. But I actually thought that he would have torn my hands to pieces with his claws. I endeavoured to get him turned round, so as to get my hand to the back of his neck. Even then I had enough to do to hold him fast. How he screamed and yelled! What an unearthly noise in the dead of the night! The vault rung with his howlings. And then, what an awful stench he emitted during his struggles! The very jackdaws in the upper storeys of the castle began to caw. Still I kept my hold. But I could not prevent his yelling at the top of his voice. Although I gripped and squeezed with all my might and main, I could not choke him. Then I bethought me of another way of dealing with the brute. I had in my pocket about an ounce of chloroform, which I used for capturing insects. I took the bottle out, undid the cork, and thrust the ounce of chloroform down the foumart's throat. It acted as a sleeping-draught. He gradually lessened his struggles. Then I laid him down upon a stone, and pressing the iron heel of my boot upon his neck, I dislocated his spine, and he struggled no more. I was quite exhausted when the struggle was over. The fight must have lasted nearly two hours."

REMOVING FISH SLIME.—To remove fish slime from the hands, do not use soap, but simply water, warm, if possible, and when all is removed, soap can be used. If eels have been handled, soap will act as a lubricator, and prevent its being rubbed off.

The Horses of Normandy.

IN alluding to the results that have followed the importation of late years into the United States of French horses for stock purposes, an American journal observes that the imported Normandy sires are a cross between the Arab and the primitive type of the Norman horse, possessing the stoutness, elegance, and docility of the former and the commanding size and strength of the latter. This description of the lineage of the Norman horse of the present day is scarcely in accordance with the accepted history of the production in France of this now well-known breed of horses; for though the Arab horse has been undoubtedly the regenerator of the indigenous breeds of the south of France, it does not appear that he has had much, if anything, to do with the amelioration of the horse of Normandy. The improvement of the Norman horse must in common fairness be attributed, not to the blood of the desert, but rather to that of the English "Turf." Of this blood, powerful agent as it is, it cannot be said that if it does no good it does no harm; and it thus happens that its injudicious employment of late years, owing to an exaggerated predilection in France for the English thoroughbred horse as a sire, is specially instructive to those who occupy themselves with horses, as affording an example that in horse-breeding, as in other matters, it is possible to have too much of a good thing. In the old time, when armoured knights tilted at each other on horses equally clad in mail, the type of the Norman horse was to be found in two breeds, the Merlerault and the Cotentin. Both of these breeds enjoyed a certain reputation; and as roads and wheeled carriages followed in the track of civilization, one came to be preferred for draught and the other for the saddle. These were the Norman breeds, which French breeders more than a century ago thought they might improve by the importation of stock from England. At that time English horses were fast rising in renown; but the first batch of them which arrived in Normandy consisted of large, heavy animals, and very coarsely bred to boot. They were thus powerless to stamp the indigenous breeds with hereditary mark of either a lasting or of a favourable character. The next importation from across the water was of a very different stamp. It consisted of twenty-four half-bred sires, and so satisfactory was the result of this experiment that the names of several of them affixed to their descendants were household words in the mouths of French breeders for many years afterwards. This was the first decisive step taken in the amelioration of the Norman horse, and these twenty-four sires brought over from England by the Master of the Horse of Louis XVI. may be considered as undoubted ancestors of the race then and ever since called by the French the Anglo-Norman breed of horses.

Unfortunately, much of the good that had resulted from the introduction into Normandy of these half-bred sires was undone by the abolishment of the Government breeding-studs in 1790. And as during the First Empire the English horse-market was closed to France, the breed commenced rapidly to

degenerate. In 1830, the year from which it may be said that the blood of the English thoroughbred horse commenced to be mixed with that of the Norman horse, it was perhaps as sorry an animal as could well be seen. He had a thick, ugly, and heavy crest, sunken withers, and bad short shoulders. His back was hollow, and he was never well ribbed-up. His hind-quarters were of all shapes, sometimes straight, sometimes rising aloft *en pupitre*. The hocks, frequently blemished, stood out from under him, making the line of the hind leg that of a sickle. A freak of fashion of former days had made a Roman nose an equine perfection, and so the Norman horse of 1830 rejoiced in a Roman nose. What with this curved line in front, and the sickle-shaped line of the hind-legs behind, the animal was said to have looked as if placed in a parenthesis. Added to all these exterior defects, he had a bad constitution. He was a soft unthrifty horse, and subject to all sorts of hereditary diseases, which he only threw off with difficulty. In the course of twenty-five years this ungainly brute, still the horse of Normandy, is pronounced to have become a good animal, and as handsome as good. Smaller, but altogether of better quality than before, he was useful either as a hack or a hunter. The larger bred ones did well as carriage horses. A rich, bright bay was the predominant colour of the Norman horse of the Second Empire, and a few were grey or sorrel. This remarkable improvement of the old Norman breeds is wholly attributable, according to French authorities, to the blood of the thoroughbred horse of England rationally and judiciously used. But according to these same authorities, the Norman horse of more recent days is the commencement of an exaggeration of the system which had such good results. The cross too often repeated has undone much of what was done in former years; and through the persistent use of the imported thoroughbred horse as a sire, instead of judicious resort to the best-shaped of home-bred animals, the Norman horse has become too high-bred and weedy, and therefore not so useful for the everyday wants of those who breed him. The present result of the importation of these high-bred Anglo-Normans into the United States is reported to be satisfactory; and this result, bearing in mind their lineage, might have been presumed to follow their introduction into that country. The produce, where it loses in elegance and grace, will probably gain in compactness and soundness, and freedom from hereditary infirmities.

ELECTRIC HARPOONS.—A new invention is the application of electricity to whale-catching. The whale-boat is provided with a galvanic battery; wires run from it to the points of harpoons; two of these being buried in the body of a whale, the current is complete, and the whale paralyzed by the shock.

AN ENORMOUS MOOSE DEER.—In carrying out the work of reclaiming the Allmandhofer bog-land, the forester in charge has made the interesting discovery of a complete skeleton of the Moose-deer (*Cervus Elaphsus muscosus*, Dessor.) in excellent preservation. The spread of the antlers is described as enormous, and their late possessor as at least "a stag of forty."

A Trap for Snakes.

DURING the late visit to a certain dak bungalow in this neighbourhood, I was entertained by the kitmutgar, while studying the anatomy of a tough *moorghie*, with a marvellous adventure of a snake.

The godown attached to the bungalow is built upon loose boulders, which, with the crevices roughly filled in with mud and broken stones, form the floor. The khansumah keeps his stores here, and has always a good supply of bottles—empty and full—in it. He had one day a tin of jam, nearly empty, which he desired to use. Now, this tin had been opened not quite *secundum artem*, but only partially, and the ends left with very jagged edges. The cover, when the tin had been last used, had not been closed down very well. This accounts for the fact that a cobra of some six feet in length, which had established the right of way from amongst the boulders into the godown, feeling a curiosity as to what was in the tin box, put his head in to satisfy the craving.

It was while the snake was thus engaged in his investigations that a man entered the godown, to fetch away the tin, but found the snake in possession. The reptile, doubtlessly as much alarmed as the *khil*, endeavoured to retreat, but found himself unable to do so from the sharp points on the edges of the tin. He expanded his hood to its utmost dimensions under the irritation, and plied the remainder of his unimprisoned body vigorously amongst the soda-water bottles beneath him. A brisk fusillade at once began, and the snake suffered severely from the fragments of exploded soda-water bottles, but was still unable to withdraw his head from the trap into which he had innocently thrust it.

The servants of the bungalow crowded round the door, each loudly advising what should be done, but none were inclined to follow the advice. A bottle of champagne lent its force to the confusion. The poor khansumah, seeing that the snake, unless immediately despatched, would ruin him, bravely entered the room armed with the kitchen spit, and killed it, but not before he had broken several bottles with his unwieldy lance. The damage done was considerable. The man bemoaned his *simkin* with especial vehemence.

HOW BEST TO KEEP FRUITS FRESH.—The scientific chemist, Dal Diaz, has discovered a simple and perfect means of keeping fruits as fresh as when gathered. For this purpose he neither boils nor heats them in any way. He merely washes them clean when they are plucked, and so places them in a fluid composed of from 200 to 300 grains of sugar to one litre of pure water and 2½ gr. to 3 gr. of salicylic acid. The pots or bottles, with their contents, are then closely covered with common writing-paper, and so kept in a locality of moderate temperature, as any excess of warmth would cause too great an evaporation of the water in the pots or bottles. In this way the discoverer has found by experience that plums, cherries, apricots, peaches, grapes, strawberries, &c., can be preserved in good sound condition for a whole year, each fruit retaining its original and peculiar flavour as fine as at first.

Insect Cunning.

A NUMBER of the small yellow ants were out feeding on some honey. I took five of them, and also five others of the same species, but from a different nest, chloroformed them, and put them close to the honey, and on the path which the ants took in going to and from the nest, so that these could not but see them.

The glass on which the honey was placed was surrounded by a moat of water. This, then, gave me an opportunity of testing both how far they would be disposed to assist a helpless fellow-creature, and what difference they would make between their nest companions and strangers from a different community. The chloroformed ants were put down at ten in the morning.

For more than an hour, though many ants came up and touched them with their antennæ, none of them did more. At length one of the strangers was picked up, carried to the edge of the glass, and quietly thrown, or rather dropped, into the water. Shortly afterwards a friend was taken up and treated in the same way. By degrees they were all picked up and thrown into the water. One of the strangers was, indeed, taken into the nest, but in about half an hour she was brought out again and thrown into the water like the rest.

I repeated this experiment with fifty ants, half friends and half strangers. In each case twenty out of the twenty-five ants were thrown into the water as described. A few were left lying where they were placed, and these also, if we had watched longer, would, no doubt, have been also treated in the same way. One out of the twenty-five friends, and three out of the twenty-five strangers, were carried into the nest; but they were all brought out again, and thrown away like the rest.

Under such circumstances, then, it seems that ants make no difference between friends and strangers.—*Sir John Lubbock.*

WORMS IN SOIL.—A correspondent to the *Gardeners' Chronicle* thus refers to this subject:—"The safest and most effectual remedy I have yet tried for the depredations of worms in soils, whether in pots or in the open ground, is soot. Last autumn, while pricking out cauliflowers on a wall border, we were sorely troubled by worms casting out the plants almost as fast as we could stick them in. We gave the surface of the border a good dressing of dry soot, and then watered it. It had a most surprising effect; the worms came sprawling to the surface by hundreds, when it was no difficult matter to gather them and put them out of harm's way. Applied also to pot-plants, say a dessert spoonfull of dry soot on the surface of a 6in. pot, it will be found to bring them hurrying over the sides of the pot as soon as water is applied. Acting also as an excellent manure, and being generally so plentiful in nurseries and gardens, I am somewhat surprised to find it so little used. On camellias especially I have found it have a most beneficial effect; it imparts a healthy dark green colour to the foliage, and stimulates the roots into a more active performance of their duty.

The Dart as a Salmon River.

FOR many years past we have heard the Dart spoken of as possessing capabilities (if properly developed) of rendering it one of the finest salmon rivers in England; and these opinions have emanated not from the uninitiated, but from those who are accounted as the highest authorities in the land. Such being the case, it is to be regretted that there is not sufficient unity in Totnes and the neighbourhood to operate in effecting so desirable an object—one on which the prosperity of the town much depends.

If the money which has been expended in litigation, in elucidating certain questions, had been spent in constructing a fish pass, the general community would now have had occasion to congratulate the promoters on so laudable an undertaking. Now, however, we are scarcely any further forward than we were years ago, and the riparian proprietors appear entirely indifferent as to any scheme for promoting the culture of salmon; thinking, no doubt, that if the fenders at the weir are removed during the close seasons, they will be able to get the fish up without granting any privileges that the promoters of a fish pass would require.

Although the fishing season has but just commenced, several salmon have been taken. During the first two days of the week one rod-and-line's man caught at the Totnes Weir, with artificial fly, two fine salmon, one weighing fifteen pounds and the other seven pounds; and there is little doubt that, if proper facilities were afforded for the ascent of fish to the higher waters, Totnes would become the resort of anglers from all quarters. The weir net fishing is this season being worked under the auspices of a new company—the Dart Fishing Association—who, we understand, intend devoting the profits arising therefrom towards making a fish pass, provided the riparian proprietors will allow the public, in return, to participate in the piscatorial art on their property.

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THE VISIT TO THE DIALS.—See "A Dog Lost."

A Dog Lost.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "FAR WEST."

CHAPTER I.—PRELIMINARY.



FORCE, no doubt, to some minds, is the police; but if in these nineteenth century, busy, pushing days we were in want of a seer, we should hardly go to the ranks of the constabulary to seek him; but, all the same, it seemed as if Police-constable Joseph

Brace was right in his prophetic mind when, in allusion to various visits that he had seen paid to the Seven Dials, he shook his head, and exclaimed—

"You'll go there wunst too often—wunst too often, my fine fellow!"

The fine fellow—or, to use his own words, the "party"—of whom he spoke was one Lionel Ambley—young, weak, impulsive, rich, and troubled with no more serious duties than a quiet promenade in the Burlington, and a ride afterwards in the Row.

P.-C. Joseph Brace must have been right; for it came to pass that Robert Garth, late tutor and companion of the said Lionel Ambley, now once more student of Caius, was seated one morning in his rooms, with the oak sported, a wet towel round his weary head, and his mind far away in the antique, when there was a summons at the door, and his gyp placed a telegraphic message in his hand.

He took the envelope eagerly, for, to a nearly friendless man, messages—even letters—were but occasional visitants; but his countenance quickly assumed a pained and drawn expression, as he comprehended more fully the meaning of the few abrupt words he read:—

"From Richard Ambley, Regent-street, to Robert Garth, Caius College, Cambridge:

"Come up directly: Lionel has disappeared."

For a few moments the young man stood with the paper crushed in his hand, as he muttered—

"Poor boy! I feared as much."

Within the hour he was at the Cambridge Station, and in due time reached the missing man's chambers in the Quadrant, to obtain the following information from Mr. and Mrs. Still, the middle-aged couple who let the rooms:—

That Lionel Ambley had gone out one evening—this was the eighth day since—and had not returned; that they had waited three days, and then, feeling very uneasy, they had written down to Norton Court, to Sir Richard Ambley, who had immediately come up to town; but he was now absent.

Ten minutes later, Sir Richard Ambley—a tall, stern old man—returned to greet Garth most warmly, but with a strange, appealing look, as if worn-out with trouble and anxiety; for he was now clutching at his last straw—to wit, the hope that Robert Garth would know enough of his son's haunts to give some clue to his whereabouts, and thus to relieve him of the horrible suspense.

"Sit down, Sir Richard."

The old man—as a rule, haughty and unbending—seemed as obedient as a child; and, taking a chair, sat attentively watching his companion's dark and thoughtful face, as he rested his forehead upon his hand.

"He went out a week yesterday?" said Garth, after a few moments.

"Yes; this day completes the eighth."

"Do you know anything about what money he had?"

"Nothing for certain; but I sent him a cheque for fifty pounds in excess of his allowance, only two days before. See here!"

Sir Richard opened his tablets, and showed his companion the memorandum.

"And, look here!" continued the old gentleman; "he had taken this off—roughly, too."

And the speaker drew from his pocket the large, old-fashioned signet ring the young man always wore, one which Garth well knew, from its tightness, to have been almost a fixture.

Garth took the ring, and turned it over in his hand, to find that it had been cut through in the thinnest part, evidently by the nippers of a bullet-mould, such as he knew to be in a pistol-case in the bed-room—a fact he proved by opening the case, in the hope that the pistol had been taken out; but, though the nippers corresponded with the cut, the pistol was in its place.

"He does not seem to have had any jewellery with him," continued Sir Richard; "unless they are fresh purchases which I have not seen him wear. Watch, chains, solitaires, studs, rings, are all in his room there, but no money."

"Ring for the landlord," said Garth, abruptly, for he was deep in thought; but he started up as Mr. Still entered the room, to stand mildly rubbing his hands, and smoothing a few greasy strands over the bald place on his head.

"Mr. Still."

"Sir, to you," said the landlord, arranging his head in his all-round collar, where it looked like a ball in a cup.

"Have you any reason for believing that Mr. Ambley had of late been in the habit of visiting either of the lower districts—the Seven Dials, for instance?"

Garth winced as he uttered those words; but his brow was knit, and there was an air of determination in his face that told of a set purpose.

"Well, sir, I don't see as I can say. You know what a gent he was for birds, and them sorter things."

"Yes, yes—exactly," said Garth, eagerly. "And who brought them?"

"Well, you see, sir, sometimes one and sometimes another. Very often, sir, it was that little lame man

as came about the dog being lost. But there's been nothing of that sort, Mr. Garth, sir, since my good lady, sir—Mrs. Still, sir—made a few words about Mr. Ambley having so much live stock—tarriers, and ferrets, and such—in the house.”

“That will do, Mr. Still,” said Garth, quietly.

“But if I might make so bold as to say, sir—”

“That will do for the present, Mr. Still,” said Garth again.

And the landlord wore quite an aggrieved aspect as he turned to leave the room.

“Do you think, then, that you have a clue?” exclaimed Sir Richard, eagerly, as the door closed behind the landlord's retreating figure.

“I don't know. I hope—I fear so,” said Garth, thoughtfully. “But stay awhile; tell me first what steps you have taken.”

Sir Richard looked disappointed, but he went on speaking—

“I directly placed myself in communication with the police; but, so far, they have done nothing. But I am upon thorns. What do you know?”

“Nothing for certain; but let me try by myself—let me see what I can do,” said Garth, thoughtfully. For he was trying to arrange his plan of action, as he sought in vain to pierce the cloud of darkness that there seemed to be ahead. He knew but too well, from old associations, the character of the region which he now felt convinced, from his own reasoning, Lionel had been in the habit of visiting; and a sense of bitterness that he could not crush down assailed him as he brought to mind a soft, gentle, pleasing face—the only bright thing he could recall from the desolation, the want, and vileness around. But, with an effort, he forced back the jealousy and anger which troubled him—though mingled at times with the softer feelings of his heart—and sternly devoted himself to the object in view.

“Yes,” he said, after a pause, during which Sir Richard had watched him eagerly, “let me go first.”

For he thought to spare the old man pain, and prevent more than one angry scene, if that which he surmised should prove to be true.

Sir Richard seemed too much upset to offer resistance to his plans; and, besides, he had great faith in the young man's foresight and discernment; so, yielding to persuasion, he consented to stay, while, with throbbing temples, Garth hurried from the house, and made his way through the labyrinth of streets which led to the Dials.

CHAPTER II.—LIONEL AMBLEY AT HOME.

WE must ask the reader to take a few retrograde steps, to carry him back to the chambers of the missing one, at a date some months prior to the events in the last chapter, the scene opening during the time of Garth's residence with the young man in the capacity of tutor.

It was evening, and the roar of fashionable Regent-street came incessantly through the *entresol* window. Garth was reading; Lionel—a tall, well-made young fellow—was lolling back, smoking with all his might.

Three or four times over the latter impatiently shifted his position, going through the performance of one who is terribly bored; but his fidgeting at-

tracted no attention, till, in a bluff, loud voice he exclaimed—

“My dear Bob, what a serious old cad you do grow! Throw away those books.”

“My dear Li, what a gloomy individual you do make yourself! Throw that cigar away, and let's have a quiet evening's reading.”

“Likely! I shall just have another cigar, and then we'll go and see something. Open that window, there's a good fellow.”

And he leaned back in the lounge of his handsomely-furnished room.

Bob, otherwise Robert Garth, rose, opened the low window, admitting the loud rattle of the traffic, and then returned to his seat, which he drew nearer to his companion.

“Look here, Li,” he said.

But there was no reply; the young man only lay back with half-closed eyes, lit a fresh cigar, and luxuriously watched the blue rings of smoke curling up towards the ceiling.

“Look here, Lionel, my dear fellow,” said Garth again, after a pause.

And this time to elicit for response the one word—

“Bother!”

“I really cannot stand this sort of thing any longer,” said Garth, without heeding the other's coolness; “you know why I am here—you know why your father wished me to be with you; and really I cannot consent to go on week after week in this unsatisfactory manner.”

“Why not?” said the other, coolly emitting a puff of smoke.

“Why not? Because I feel as if I were robbing him. A month gone to-day, and what have we done?”

“Done? Seen no end of life, my boy—studies from nature—what more would you have?”

“Life!” exclaimed Garth, bitterly; “do you call that wretchedly artificial existence that we have seen by gaslight, life? If I were a moralist, I should call it the well-lighted antechamber of the pit; but, there—I won't preach.”

“No, don't, that's a good fellow. Dare say you're all right, but it's a very pleasant way of going down to the pit, all the same. But, I say, Bob, don't bother: you've been very jolly so far. Let's go on just the same.”

“And your father?”

“Bless his old heart! What about him? Sent me a cheque this morning—extra, you know—and hoped we got on well together. He's got a first-rate opinion of you. By the way, write and acknowledge the cheque, and say we get on first-rate.”

“But Ambley, pray be serious.”

“So I am!” exclaimed the other, pettishly, as he dashed his cigar out of the window, and suddenly rose to a sitting posture. “Now, look here, Bob—I like having you with me, 'pon my soul, I do; you act like ballast to me—you do, indeed. I'm given to carrying too much sail, and if it was not for you I should be like my little yacht, the *K'ittiwake*, in a squall, and on my beam-ends in no time.”

Garth tapped the table impatiently with his fingers.

“Now look here, Bob,” continued Lionel, “as to robbery. Now, don't you be a fool; you're saving

the governor no end by keeping down my expenses. For you know, Bob, I am rather afraid of you—I am, indeed; but I want you to stop with me, all the same. Now, don't speak; it's my turn to preach now. As to reading, and that sort of thing, studying and working up—I can't read, and I won't read. I'm not clever, and classics are no use to me, and never will be, with my income. What the deuce do I care about Homer and Virgil, and all the rest of the Greek and Roman humbugs? It's right enough for a clever fellow like you—all brains, and no money. But, 'pon my soul, Bob, if you bother me any more, I'll swear, and then I'll bolt; so there's an end of it."

Garth shrugged his shoulders, and then in despair closed the book at his side, gazing the while with a serio-comic look of chagrin in the handsome Saxon face of the late speaker.

"Taint your fault, Bob, so just hold your tongue, and have a cigar; and pitch me over another, for I'm dog tired."

Saying which, he contrived to catch the roll of tobacco leaf, lit a fusee on the sole of his boot, and then threw himself back; but only, as there came a smart rap at the door, to yell out impatiently—

"Come in."

CHAPTER III.—A BILLET-DOUX.

"COME in," shouted Lionel Ambley.

When the door was opened, and a smart-looking maid brought in a letter, which was evidently for the master of the chambers; but as his hands were locked together behind his reclining head, and the exertion seemed more than he cared to encounter, Garth took the letter from the girl, and glanced at the superscription.

"For you," he said, as the girl retired.

"Taint from the governor, I can see at this distance," said Lionel. "Open it and see what's inside, there's a good fellow. Tailor's bill, I'll be bound."

"No," said Garth, turning the note over uneasily; "it is evidently a lady's hand."

"Lady's hand! Gammon! Who'd write to me?"

"Lady's hand—evidently French," continued Garth.

And then he read from the envelope—

"To Mr. ———, Mr. L. A., 87, Regent-street."

"Why, it's in answer to the advertisement," cried Lionel, bursting out into a loud laugh. "Read it out, old boy."

Garth seemed as if he were attracted by the delicacy of the handwriting, as, instead of tearing open the missive, he drew forth a penknife, and cut the paper, heedless of Lionel Ambley's sneering cough.

"What a model of care you are, Bob," he exclaimed; "fold your clothes up every night when you go to bed, I'll swear."

Garth smiled, and then read aloud:—

"HONoured SIR—Seeing your advertisement in to-day's *Telegraph*, I believe I know a gentleman who was followed by a dog answering the description of your bull-terrier. So I will do myself the honour of waiting upon you this evening, at eight o'clock.—Your obedient servant,

"FANCY."

"Your obedient servant," repeated Lionel.

"'To command' scratched out," said Garth.

"That's a rum sort of letter to come in a lady's hand, and in French style—isn't it? Is it spelt right?"

"Perfectly; and the writing is exquisite."

"Some dog-stealing cad, safe; and he has set some one to write for him."

"He'll be here directly, if he keeps his appointment," said Garth, referring to his watch. "It only wants a few minutes to eight. What will you do? See Mr. Fancy, or hand him over to the police?"

"See him—of course. What's the good of handing him over to the police? Cost me just as much money, and then I should not get my dog."

Garth shrugged his shoulders, while Lionel lay back a little farther in his lounge, so that he could hold up and admire the sit of his close, gloomy-looking, drab trousers.

"Not a bad fit, are they, Bob?" he said, after a pause.

"Excellent—for a stable-helper," was the sarcastic reply.

"H'm, perhaps so. But they are like the real thing, though, ain't they? Elstob's an out-and-outer for taking up an idea, if you give it him."

"Stably ideas, I suppose?" said Garth.

"Yes, if you like," said Lionel, sulkily.

And then the young man smoked on in silence, till, forgetting the sneers of his companion, Lionel again spoke.

"Wonder whether this chap will turn up, Bob. Try another advertisement if he don't. I wouldn't have lost that dog for twenty pounds."

"And I would give twenty pounds sooner than keep the ugly wretch," said Garth.

"Perhaps so, Bob; but then you can't appreciate breed. Don't be cross, old chap," he continued, laughing. "You must be bear-leader, and lick me into shape."

Garth shrugged his shoulders, and said nothing.

"There, turn up the gas a little higher, Bob, and do, for goodness' sake, give up that confounded French shrug. And I say, Bob, if this cad does come, leave me to manage him. His won't be a classic tongue, old fellow; and I know how to deal with these fellows so much better than you. By Jove, though, here he is! Come in!"

For there had been another knock at the door, and the maid once more appeared.

"Plee, sir, there's a man downstairs as says he have an appointment with you, sir. Is he to come up?"

"Yes, send him up, Mary; that is, if he's fit."

"Fit, sir?" said the girl, looking puzzled.

"Yes; clean—decent!" cried Lionel, laughing.

And the girl retired.

A minute later, a heavy, halting step was heard upon the stairs, and the visitor was ushered into the room.

CHAPTER IV.—"D. WRAGG, NATRALIST."

"SARVANT, gentlemen," said the new-comer, making four steps forward into the room, each step being accompanied by the planting of a club-soled boot, some six inches thick, a couple of

feet forward, when, with a bow and a jerk, the other leg was brought to the front, and the man stood upright, took another step, bowed, and again jerked himself into the perpendicular—each effort of locomotion being accompanied by an automaton flourish of one arm, similar to that of a farming-man sowing turnips broadcast.

He was a wiry-looking little fellow, with sharp, ferretty eyes, and short jerky hair standing up at the sides of his head, giving him the look of a fierce Scotch terrier—the resemblance being heightened by an occasional twitch of the facial muscles, which might have been taken for displays of annoyance at the workings of troublous insects beyond the reach of teeth or paws.

"Sarvant, gentlemen," he said; "and if so be as it ain't a liberty—"

He paused in his utterance, jerked himself back to the door, opened it, peered out as if seeking a rat—if not smelling one—closed the door again, jerked himself forward, and laid one finger beside a very small nose, saying—

"I'll make all snug afore I begin."

This was evidently in completion of his sentence; and then, while in a half-amused, half-contemptuous manner, Lionel Ambley watched his actions, the man leaned his body first on one side, then on the other, as if, with ultra-caution, he was endeavouring to peer behind the two occupants of the room—peeping beneath the table, and finishing the performance by tip-toeing and straining his neck to look here and there in the most mysterious way imaginable.

"Confound you! why don't you look up the chimney, while you are about it?" cried Lionel, at last.

"What the deuce does the fellow mean?"

"It's all right, gentlemen," said the man, taking a handkerchief out of his hat, wiping his face, and then placing the very tall head-covering upon the floor, while, out of a shabby old dress-coat pocket, he dragged a copy of a newspaper.

"Which of you gents is L. A.," he continued, when, after much jerking and fumbling, he had contrived to open and refold the paper to his taste, and with one extremely dirty finger to fix, as it were, the advertisement.

"Never you mind about that," said Lionel, gruffly; "have you brought the dog?"

"Brought the dorg, gentlemen? Now, is it likely?" was the answer, in tones of remonstrance. "Not likely. How could I bring the dorg when I hadn't got it? It was only through seeing that ad. in the paper that I says, says I, 'Why, that there's just like the dorg as I see Mr. Barkles with'—a dorg as, he said, follered him 'ome lars night's a week."

Lionel growled, and the visitor jerked himself a step forward.

"So I says to my Linny, I says, 'Jest drop a line,' I says, 'to the pore gent as has lost his dorg,' I says; 'and I'll see if I can't be the 'appy mejum of gettin' on it back for him.'"

"Look here, my man," said Garth, regardless of his pupil's frown; "bring the dog back, and my friend will pay the offered reward."

"Bring the dorg back here, sir? Well, no; that aint likely. How do I know what might happen? Don't you make no mistake about me, sir. I'm a

re-spectable tradesman, and that's my card, 'D. Wragg, Natralist, Dealer in Brish and Furren Birds, and setter, 12, Brownjohn-street, Seven Dials.'"

As he spoke, he held out a dirty, glazed, worn-edged card to the last speaker, who motioned to him to place it upon the table, which was done with a great deal of jerking and twitching, Mr. D. Wragg pushing the piece of pasteboard well into view, and then, apparently not satisfied, standing it up on edge against a book, before continuing—

"I'm good for what you like, gents, from a dorg down to a pegging finch. Do you want a 'arf-dozen o' rats to try a terrier? Send to me. Is it a good blackish ferret, I'm ready for you. It were only last week I had a badger. I've squirrels as'll crack nuts fit to give to any lady in the land. Do you want a few score o' blue rocks for 'Ornsey or 'Urlingham? I've got 'em; 'arf a 'undred o' sparrers—a hedge'og—a toy tarrier—or a poll parrot as wouldn't say swear to save its life, and I'm your man. That's my card—D. Wragg, Natralist, Dealer in Brish and Furren Birds, and setter, 12, Brownjohn-street, Seven Dials. And what's more, make it a tenner, and I'll undertake to say as I'll wuck the gent as your dorg follered, so as you can come on to my place to-morrow, put down the stiff, and bring your dorg 'ome agin."

Mr. D. Wragg, the "natralist's" countenance, had been a study as he delivered himself of this harangue, jerking, twitching, and showing his teeth, as if he were constantly about to snap at an obtrusive fly settled upon his nose, but never achieving thereto. But now stooping, he took his handkerchief from the hat upon the floor, put the newspaper in its place, and then indulged in a good wipe, as his sharp, ferretty eyes gazed inquiringly from face to face.

"Now look here, you sir," said Lionel, roughly; "I offered a fiver for the dog, because that's what he's worth. I believe him to have been stolen; but never mind about that. I'll give five pounds to have him back, and there's an end of it. If you like to earn the money—bring the dog back; if not—cut!"

"Now, just a minute, gentlemen. See here, now," and resting his elbow upon his hip, the visitor stretched out one open palm, and patted it softly with the other; but instead of looking at any one, his restless eyes wandered from the sporting prints to the ballet dancers upon the wall, and from them again to the cigar-boxes, pipes, and other evidences of the owner's tastes. "Now, look here, gents: don't you make no mistake. I'm a re-spectable tradesman, and if it rested with me—there's your dorg; I don't want no rewards for doing what's right. I get my reward in making a good customer. But, don't you see, it's a gent as has got the dorg. It follered him, and he's took a fancy to it. He's a reg'lar customer of mine, and he says to me, he says—'I wouldn't part with that dorg,' he says, 'for ten pound, I wouldn't. He polished off ten rats in two minutes this very mornin',' he says."

"That's the dog, and no mistake!" cried Lionel, excitedly.

"To be sure it is," said D. Wragg, with his eyes twinkling; "and that there gent as has got him, sir, is a man as I never knowed to break his word. I

says to him, though, I says, 'Suppose,' I says, 'as the real owner of him was to turn up; you'd let him go then?' I says. 'Well,' he says, 'if he were a real gent, praps I might; but sech a noble beast as that ere didn't ought to be in anybody's hands.'

Lionel looked half amused, half inquiringly at Garth, who, however, merely turned over the leaves of a book and avoided his gaze.

"What do you say to it, Bob?" said Lionel, at last.

"Ring the bell and send for a policeman," said the other, laconically.

"Was that there meant to allude to me, sir?" said the man, with a snap, which must have dislodged the fly had it been present. "Well, gents, if it's a-comeing to that, I'm off. There's my card—that's me—D. Wragg, Natralist; but don't you make no mistake. I aint a running away because of the police, which is a body of men as I despises, and well they knows it, too. I aint got your dorg—'taint likely—and you may search my place, if you like, with all the *po*-lice in London; and if you get your dorg back, why, all I can say is, as you're luckier than most gents is—so good-night to you."

D. Wragg jerked down, picked up his hat, and was about to put it on; but he dropped it the next moment, for, with a bound, Lionel leaped from his chair, and, before Garth had recovered from his astonishment, D. Wragg was seized by the throat and being forcibly shaken, as the young man hissed between his teeth—

"You scoundrel! What have you done with my dog?"

CHAPTER V.—THE FIRST ASSIGNATION.

AS soon as he could recover from his surprise, Garth ran to his friend, and, partly by force, partly by entreaty, made him quit his hold upon the trembling man, who once more picked up his hat, and endeavoured to put it in its proper place; but, what with his trembling hands and the roughly-folded paper inside, the attempt was a failure.

But the danger being removed, the confidence of D. Wragg returned, and, with an amount of jerking and twisting that was almost frightful in the way in which it threatened dislocation of sundry members, even if it did not break the man's neck, he took the paper from his hat, and contrived to stuff it into one of the tight coat-pockets; then the covering was thrust on defiantly, and its owner began to jerk himself towards the door.

"Here, confound you, stop!" said Lionel. "Name your time, and I'll come and fetch the brute. I know that it is a stealing case—I can see that; but I'm not going to put myself to further trouble on that account."

"Don't you make no mistake, gents, and don't you go calling things by no hard names. I didn't steal your dorg. I'm a *re*-spectable tradesman, I am; and if you want a score—"

"Confound you! What time?" roared Lionel, angrily, as he once more started to his feet.

"Any time afore one, gents—any time in the morning; but don't you make no mistake about me. And look here, gents, I know that there party well as has got your dorg—leastwise, if it is the same

dorg—and he's one o' them suspicious sorter parties, that if so be as he thought as there'd be any gammon—"

"Gammon? What do you mean?" cried Lionel, for the man paused.

"Dodges, gents, dodges—sech as suspecting on him of having stole the dorg and gettin' of his name dirty. Why, if there was any o' that sorter thing, that there dorg would never be seen again; and as to bringing the police, either uniform or plain clothes, it's my belief as he'd smell 'em a mile orf, as sure as my name's D. Wragg, Natralist; so don't you make no—"

"There, that'll do," growled Lionel.

And, apparently bearing no malice for his rough treatment, the little man jerked himself to the door, turned, winked solemnly at Garth, and the next moment he was gone.

"What do you think of that, Bob?" said Lionel, as the heavy step was heard descending the stairs.

"Shall I tell you? You will not be offended?"

"Offended? Not I; say what you like."

"Better not," said Garth, bluntly; "for my thoughts run upon self-government, and the way in which some part with their money."

But Lionel did not seem to understand the allusion, for he only whistled softly as he set light to another cigar.

CHAPTER VI.—THE QUEEN'S LEVEE.

BROWNJOHN-STREET, Seven Dials, on a bright summer's morning, when improvements had not made the neighbourhood a little less dingy than of old; when the pleasant district named after, but, all the same, a perfect disgrace to, the good saint, Giles, had not recovered from the vast and clean sweep to which it had been subjected.

So early in the day the Dials was at peace. There was no fight in progress before either of the palaces famed for the dispensing of gin; the police were not binding some fierce, dishevelled, and blaspheming virago to a stretcher, and then patting their hair or whiskers in tender spots from whence locks had been ravished by the handful, previous to bearing the drunken scold to the X station, attended by a train of howling creatures in human form, but debased by "the vitriol madness"—the poison, mental and bodily, sold to them by the name of the "Cream of the Valley"—of the "Shadow of Death" might well have been added. The courts of the palaces were peaceful, and brawny-muscl'd bar and potmen were brightening counters, polishing plate-glass and mirrors, or burnishing brass, ready for the night, when the gas should be in full blaze. Men and women slink in and out now—coming in a dark, secretive way, to partake of "pen'orths," or, as they were here facetiously termed, "coffin nails," to rouse the spirits, flagging from the previous night's debauch. Burglars and pickpockets—nightbirds both—slept in their lairs, hiding from the light, and waiting in drunken sleep for the darkness that was to them their day.

But Brownjohn-street was full of life; young men and women of the Seven Dials type—not children, though their years varied from five to ten—span the celebrated Dials top, or sent pointed instruments,

known as "cats," darting through the air; half-penny kites were flown with farthing balls of cotton; and one select party waltzed, fancy free, around a street organ, what time a young gentleman of about twelve, who had already attained to the dignity of greased sidelocks, performed a castanet accompaniment upon two pairs of bones, and another of the same age, whose costume embraced one rag, one pair of trousers, secured beneath the armpits with string, and a great deal of dirt, stood upon his head, swayed his legs about as if in cadence with the air played by the organist, and occasionally beat together the soles of his bony feet. Altogether it was a happy party, and the Italian ground away, and showed his white teeth; the children danced; and that scene might have been Arcadian, but for the Dials and the dirt.

For be it known that vehicles seldom passed down Brownjohn-street. The warning "Hi!" was rarely uttered by the driver, and the children ran in and out of the burrows of the human warren wild and free, until old enough to be trained to prey upon their fellows. But they partook more of the rat than the rabbit in their nature, for they were small-sized, careworn street Arabs, whose names would yet become famous in the *Hue and Cry*, or, under the head of "Police Intelligence," in the morning papers.

Dense, dismal, close, swarming, dirty, with the flags broken, and the gutters heaped up with refuse. Such was Brownjohn-street; for dandies no longer escorted beauty homeward to such and such a number, in a sedan chair, with running footmen and link-bearers to clear the way. But, teeming with population as was Brownjohn-street, those swarms were not all of the *genus homo*. The place upon this bright summer morning, when the sun was struggling with the mists and foul exhalations, was a perfect *rus in urbe*. The Italian's organ was drowned by the notes of birds, as lark, canary, and finch sang, one against the other, glorious trills, whispering of verdant mead and woodland grove, as they hung in cages by the hundred outside dingy windows.

The shops were full of birds from floor to ceiling. One place had its scores of wooden cages, some eight inches square, each containing its German canary immigrant. Another window was aviary and menagerie combined; but no shop displayed so great a variety as the one bearing the name of "D. Wragg, naturalist, dealer in British and foreign birds."

Grey parrots shrieked, bantams crowed, ferrets writhed and twisted, like fuzzy snakes; rabbits thrust their noses between the bars of a parrot's cage; a pair of hedgehogs lay like prickly balls in the home lately vacated by a lark; and quite a dozen dogs were ranged outside, over the area-grating, in rabbit-hutches, to the great hindrance of the light and the washing of one Mrs. Winks, then being carried on in the cellar-kitchen.

There was a door to D. Wragg's shop, if you could get through it without hanging yourself in the chains swinging with collars attached from one post, or avoid knocking down the dragons which watched from the other side.

Not that these last were inimical monsters, for

they were but dragon-pigeons, watching with an anxiety in their soft eyes which told of expected food or water.

It was different, though, with the dogs, since they snapped openly at trousers legs, out of which garments, in spite of a reputation for harmlessness, they had been known to take pieces.

The pinky cockatoos also possessed a firmness of beak that was by no means pleasant if they could manage a snip. But, pass the door, and you were pretty safe amidst the wonders which met your eye; a couple of knowing-looking magpies gazing at you sideways; a jay, whose business of life it seemed to be to make two hops with the regularity of a pendulum; squirrels and white mice spun round their cages, and fidgeted and scratched; a doleful owl blinked in a corner; a large hawk glared with wicked eyes from cage to cage, as if asking who would die next to make him a meal, as he stood on one leg and smelt nasty in another corner; parrots squealed, and avadavats twittered; while bullfinches professed to pipe, but did not; though a white hare, fast changing its hue, did tabor once on the side of its hutch.

And even when you had seen these, you had not seen all, for in every available, or unavailable, place there was something stowed, living or dead. Live birds cuddled up together, budgerigars whistled and scratched, while in one large wire cage, apparently quite content, about fifty rats scurried about, or sat in heaps, with their long, worm-like tails hanging out in all directions from between the wires, as if they were fishing for food, and snatched at the chance of getting a bite. One sage grey fellow sat up in a corner, in an attitude evidently borrowed from a feline enemy, whom he imitated as he busied himself over his toilet, pawing and smoothing his whiskers like an old buck of a rat, as he undoubtedly was, and happily ignorant that before many hours were past he would be sold with his fellows by the dozen, and called upon to utter his last squeak while helping to display the gameness of one of the steel-trap-jawed terriers, trying so hard to strangle themselves, and making their eye-balls protrude as they hung by their collars, tugging in the most insensate way at chains that would not break.

And here, amidst trill, whistle, screech, squeak, coo, snarl, and bark—amongst bird-seed, German paste, rat and mousetraps, cages, new and second-hand, besides the other wonders which helped to form D. Wragg's stock-in-trade, lived to brighten the Seven Dials, fair little Queen Linny—whose bright, bird-like voice vied with those of the warblers around, and whose soft, plump form looked as tender, as loveable, and as innocent as that of one of the creamy doves that came to her call, perched upon her shoulder, and—oh, happy dove!—fed from the two ruddy bee-stung, honeyed lips, that pouted and offered a pea or a crumb of bread to the softly cooing bird, which seemed to gaze lovingly at the bright face, the brighter for the dark framing of misery, vice, and wretchedness by which it was surrounded.

D. Wragg sat in his back room, a pleasant museum of stuffed departed stock-in-trade. He was

smoking his pipe, and spelling over the morning's paper, taking great interest in the last garotting case—merely called in those days a violent assault—while, amidst a busy fluttering, Linny was dispensing seed, red sand, chickweed, and groundsel, and other food—with water unlimited—to the hungry many.

"His there anything as I can do for you, my dovey?" said a voice.

And a round, red, fat face appeared from somewhere, being thrust into the shop between a parrot's cage and a bunch of woolly and mossy balls, such as are supplied to birds about to set up housekeeping.

"Nothing this morning, Mrs. Winks," trilled Linny.

"Not nothink, my dovey? No collars, nor hanky-chys, nor cuffs? The water's bilin', and the soap and sody waitin', so don't say as there aint nothink as I can wash."

"Nothing—nothing—nothing," laughed Linny; "but be a dear old soul, and fetch me a pail of clean water to fill the globe, for it is so dirty and wet down there in the back."

"Of course I will, my pet; only give me the pail, or I shall be knocking of something down if I come inside."

Further speech was stayed by the mysterious behaviour of D. Wragg, who jerked himself into the shop, peered out of the door, and then made a hasty sign to the old woman to quit the place, as he softly muttered to himself—

"Here he is, at last."

CHAPTER VII.—THE LEVEE CONTINUED.

D. WRAGG was wrong, and after a few minutes' impatient jerking about he retired to his den, his place being shortly afterwards occupied by Mrs. Winks, to whom Linny handed the pail, correcting very mildly a spaniel that leaped up at her as she did so. She then disappeared for a few minutes, to return bearing in her little hands a large globe, in which were sailing round and round half a dozen gold fish, staring through the glass in a stupid, contented way, as their bright scales glistened and their fat mouths opened and shut in speechless fashion. Then, as she set the globe down upon the counter, there came a loud panting from the passage—a heavy rustling—and the next moment it was evident that Mrs. Winks had made her way round to the front, for she now puffed her way in at the shop-door, bearing the well-filled pail.

"Oh, how kind!" cried Linny. "I could have taken it in at the side."

"You look fit to carry pails, now, don't you, you kitten?" said the stout dame, smiling.

And she stood, very tubby in shape, and rested her pinky, washing-crinkled hands, for a moment upon her hips; then she wiped her nose upon her washed-out print apron; and, lastly, as Linny stooped to pour the water from the globe and to replenish it with fresh, Mrs. Winks softly took a step nearer, and just once gently stroked the young girl's fair, glossy hair, drawing back her hand the next instant, as Linny looked up and smiled.

"Ah, my dovey—why, here's mounseer just going out for his walk!" exclaimed Mrs. Winks, as a little,

shabby, yellow-faced man, squeezed into the shop through the side-door, his shoulders hoisted nearly to his ears, and his hands occupied—the one with a cigarette, the other with a tasselled cane.

"Ah! tiens, then, dogs," he cried, thumping his cane upon the floor, for he had been saluted with a barking chorus; "and how is *petite reine*?"

Linny held out her hand, when, laying his cigarette upon the counter, the old man took off his hat, placed it in the same grasp that held his stick, and then, with the grace of an old courtier, kissed the little round fingers that were extended to him. Directly after he replaced his hat, but only to raise it in salute to Mrs. Winks, who acknowledged the act of courtesy by shortening herself two inches, and then rising to her normal height and breadth.

"I was just going to say, mounseer, that if all people were as polite as you, how easily we could get along; and that if I was like little Linny here, people wouldn't be so rude and queer, when one goes round with the basket."

"Aha! they are rude, then, those people in the gallere?"

"Rude aint nothing to it, Mr. Canau; they makes way fast enough for the man with the porter, but when I'm coming with my basket of apples, oranges, biscuits, ginger-beer, and bill of the play, they goes on dreadful—a-sticking out their knees and grumbling, and a-hindering one to that degree that you've no idea what a heat I'm in when I've gone down a row; and never gets half down before the curting rises again, let alone their remarks about being fat. Just as if I made myself fat, which I don't; and as I says to one hungry-looking fellow, I says, 'If I was thin as you, I'd be a super still, and you admiring of me, instead of me having to supply people's nasty animal wants, and being abused for it.' For—I put it to you now, Mr. Canau—can people do without their apples, and oranges, and things, when a play's long and heavy; and I'm sure I've helped many a noo piece to a success, when it would—Oh, if there isn't the water a bilin' over!"

With an agility and lightness that was almost cork-like, Mrs. Winks—warned by a strong and pungent odour steaming up between the boards—hurried down below; the little Frenchman lit his cigarette, kissed his hand to Linny, and then shuffled, in well-worn and cracked Wellington boots, from the shop.

Linny refilled her bright bowl with water, and bore it through the side-door, and soon after returned to continue supplying the many wants around; but only to be interrupted by a fresh-comer—a bare-footed, round-faced, ragged man, smoking a short black pipe, but bent almost double beneath the heavy basket he bore, one which required a great deal of manœuvring to get it past the cages, in addition to a great many low adjurations, in a husky voice, to "come on then!" or to "get out!" But at last it was safely deposited beside the counter, when the bearer made quite an Indian salaam, bending low in salutation to the laughing girl.

"That's the werry last noo bow, miss; I larnt that of my friend, Jammesec Jeejeewo, what plays the little tomtom drum with his fingers outside the public-houses of a night, and sings, 'Fa-la-ma-sa-fa-

la-ta;' and sells scent packets, and smiles like a nigger all day long in Oxford-street. He's own brother to the opium-eatin' cove as has allers got the cold shiver and freeze, and sweeps the crossin' at the Cirkis. That's it, Miss Linny," he said, bow-



ing again with outstretched hands. "Blame the thing! what are you up to?" he shouted, shaking and snapping his soft fingers, one of which had come in contact with the cage of a hungry parrot, and been smartly nipped.

"Well, Dick," said Linny, smiling.

"Love and bless your pretty face, miss. Why, you makes the shop full of sunshine, and the birds to sing happier than if they was far away amongst their own woods and fields. But now to business, miss," he exclaimed, as, stooping to the basket on the floor, he brought out, piled one upon the other, a dozen freshly-cut, green, round, cheese-plate-like clover turfs. "Tuffs is getting werry skeerce, miss, and they're riz another penny a dozen. Penny a mile, miss, accordin' to Act of Parlyment, miss. Every mile I goes farther away I puts on a penny a dozen. They won't let you cut 'em anywheres; and I got these four miles t'other side of Pa'n'ton. I'm blest if there'll be a bit of country soon, or a blessed scrap of chickweed or grunsel, or a tuff to cut anywears. There wouldn't be no water-creases if people didn't grow 'em a purpose; and that's what I shall have to do with grunsel—have a farm, and grow it by the acre. You know, miss, the bricks and mortar frightens the green stuff; and it goes farder and farder away, until it costs me a pound a year more for shoe-leather than it did a time ago."

"Come, Dick, business," said Linny, smiling.

"Toe be sure, miss—business," said Dick. "Grunsell, miss; there you are. Chickweed, green as green, and fresh as a daisy; plantain—there's a picter—there's fine long stalks, as full of seeds as Injin corn, and 'most as big; but, blow my rags, if

I don't think as this here's the werry last to be got, so look out."

As he spoke, the man placed the various bunches he had enumerated upon the counter, and then looked up smiling in Linny's face as she spoke.

"Why, you've told me that story, Dick, ever since I was a little girl," laughed Linny, as she paid him; while every coin the man took he rubbed upon his eyelids for luck, as he said, before wrapping them in the piece of dirty rag which served him for a purse.

"So I have, miss, so I have; but really things is now growing to a pretty pass, and you've no idea the miles I have to tramp. Now, lookye there! what do you say to that, Miss Linny? Them sorter things don't grow amongst scuffle poles, and mortar boards, and contractors' brick rubbidge. Why, I had to go—"

"Oh, Dick! oh, Dick! you good fellow! Oh, how sweet!" exclaimed Linny, with sparkling eyes, as the rough fellow brought from out of his basket, with the dew yet heavy upon their petals, a bouquet of woodland flowers—late violets, hyacinths, primroses, and the peachy wood anemone.

She took them from him with almost childish joy, smelt them, kissed them, and then for a moment held them to her breast; but only to dart into the back room for a little common vase, to fill it with water, and then carefully place within it her flowers.

"I thought as you'd like 'em," said the man, as he watched her with glistening eye; "but they're getting werry skeerce, miss; and what with the building and closing commons, and shutting up of Epping foresses, there soon won't be no more flowers for poor people only in shop winders and grand ladies' bonnets, and of course they won't smell. You mark my words, miss, afore long London



'll get to be so big that it'll fill up all England, and swaller up all the country, so that they'll have to build right out all round into the sea, and get their grunsel and chickweed for singin' birds from foreign abroad."

"It was very kind of you, though, Dick, to think of me," said Linny.

And she held out her hand, with a coin or two half-hidden therein; but the rough gipsy fellow shook his head as he struggled against the tempta-



tion, for it was hard work to refuse money; then, stooping, he just touched the little fingers with his lips as he occupied his hands with the straps of his basket.

"I don't want no paying for 'em, miss. I aint forgot the many a good turn you done my poor missus. I aint half outer debt yet. Besides, I'm flush just now; got a good two bobs' worth o' stuff, if I'm lucky, and here goes to sell it! Guv'nor all right?"

As the answer came in the affirmative, the rough fellow guided his basket out, and commenced singing, in a sonorous minor key—

"Chickweed and grunsel for your singin' birds!" as he turned to go down the street, rubbing his eyes with the knuckles of one hand.

"Might ha' been like her, if she'd only ha' lived," he muttered.

And then, as he gave his eyes another rub, the dirty knuckles of his hand glistened, as if with moisture, as he gave his strap and basket a hitch before going any farther.

Chickweed Dick was gone; but he only gave place to one Chucky, who drew a donkey-cart to the door, and brought in a basket of red sand. Then came boys to ask the price of guinea-pigs or white mice; boys to offer squirrels or hedgehogs for sale—miry and dusty boys, with the marks of the shires upon their shabby garb to indicate long tramps, as bits of hay and straw whispered of nights passed beneath some friendly stack; but D. Wragg was already overstocked; and, in spite of references made by Queen Linny, there was no dealing, and the subjects she had to feed remained unaugmented.

Three times did D. Wragg jerk himself into the

shop, his turnip-sowing hand threatening to knock over some cage as he progressed to the door; but, after a glance up and down the street, he worked himself back to his newspaper, and again spelled over the police reports.

Linny sang on as she fed her subjects, and, as if in emulation, the birds whistled loudly, darting eagerly at their cage-bars as she distributed the green food brought by Dick; but her song suddenly ceased, as did that of the birds, when a heavy-looking Seven Dials typical young fellow, in a sleeved vest, entered the shop, breathed hard, and then, staring at Linny the while, asked to look at some finches.

Linny, trembling the while, lifted down a cage containing, perhaps, a score; but the gentleman seemed hard to please, pointing out failings here and there in the various birds, till he seemed to fix the poor girl with his stare, and kept her striving to master her trepidation, and to hide from her rufianly visitor the fact that his presence caused her dread.

"I say," he whispered, suddenly—"I say," and he leaned across the counter.

The movement seemed to break the spell, for Linny made an effort to retreat to the back room; but, in a moment, the fellow had stretched out one long, gorilla-like arm, effectually barring her way, when hawk and dove, in the naturalist's shop, once more stood, eye to eye—the weak quailing before the strong.

CHAPTER VIII.—JANET.

A LOUD rustle of D. Wragg's paper ended the scene, for, starting up, the rough visitor turned his attention towards the birds once more, and recommenced his fault-finding, giving Linny time to



recover herself, and to redden with anger at what she was ready to call her cowardice, when there was some one in the next room.

"You see, it aint for myself," said the fellow, once more fixing his gaze upon Linny, but turning

the cage round the while. "It wouldn't matter if I wanted it; but he'll have to come and choose one for himself. I don't think I'll take one to-day."

Linny made an effort to draw back the cage; but with a grin, and a repetition of the hard breathing, the fellow drew it farther away.

"I say, aint you got a kind word to say to a chap?" he whispered; when there was again the rustling of D. Wragg's paper.

A moment after Wragg was heard to rise, and he jerked himself once more into the shop, and would have passed on to the door, but for Linny's appealing look, which he saw, and directly offered to take her place.

Linny, by way of answer, hurried into the back room, when a sharp piece of bargaining ensued between customer and dealer, ending, as might have been foreseen, in the customer finding all possible fault, and then declining to purchase, as he went outside, to stand staring heavily through the window, ostensibly at the contents, but really to see if the bright little maiden returned.

Linny did not return, but began slowly to ascend the stairs, pausing at the first landing, to fall into an attitude of attention, clinging to the balustrade, and listening eagerly, as from below came the twittering of birds, and from above—in long-drawn, nerve-thrilling tones—sounds that seemed to have a strange effect upon the girl as she stood in the full light of the landing window, her eyes half closed, her face upturned, and her lips parted, as though to give passage to some heart-wrung sigh.

But there was no sigh, no utterance, no motion; always the same strained aspect of attention, as still, from above stairs, came the sounds—now low, almost to fading away; now powerful and loud—but always with the same effect, that of chaining Linny to where she clung.

She might well listen as if entranced, for from far up, with every note given with a feeling that seemed to find its echo in the listener's ears, came floating softly down the melody of "Ah, non giunge!" evidently played upon a violin of fine and sonorous tone, every bar sweet, pure, and clear, and softened by the distance into a strain which seemed to have floated into the dingy house from some brighter region.

Then, after a pause of a few moments, there was a change, the player dashing off into a wild and eccentric variation upon the theme, now loud and sparkling in the major key—now minor, plaintive and thrilling.

But this lasted but for a few minutes; for, as Linny once more began to ascend the stairs, the violinist dashed off into a French mazurka, with such spirit and brilliancy that the notes seemed to be trilling out in joyous laughter, setting Linny's head nodding to the gay refrain.

The next minute she had opened a chamber-door, and stood in presence of the player, who placed her instrument on the table, and moved slowly across the room to catch the young girl's extended hands.

Canau's room was bare and cheerless: a table, a few chairs, a couple of roughly-made music-stands, and a pile of torn, stained, yellow-leaved—printed

and MS.—music, were the principal objects that met the gaze; but Linny—whose presence lent a brightness to the blank place—seemed to have no eye for aught but the swarthy deformed girl, whom she kissed affectionately.

Perhaps no greater contrast could have been seen than the sweet, happy face of Linny, with her bright brown hair and peachy complexion—peachy with its soft down and contrasts of creamy white and delicate pink—and that of Janet—she was known by no other name—the dark, swarthy, deformed girl brought up by Monsieur Canau, the little French musician, now taking his morning promenade, and indulging in his only extravagance, his second cigarette—a pinch of the commonest tobacco, rolled in one of the gummed squares of tissue-paper, prepared for him by the girl who shared his poverty, and had been taught his art.

The tiny spark of life was bright and vivid, shooting keenly now from two dark eyes; but as for the fleshly case that held this vital spark, the wonder was that it should possess any shape at all, after the fearful moulding it had received in its early plastic days; and not that the poor girl's head should be close down between her shoulders, and that in size she should be diminutive and shrunken.

"I've been listening ever so long," cried Linny, drawing a little white finger across the violin strings. "I wish I were clever too, and could play this."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the other, harshly; "I'm ashamed of it sometimes. It isn't a woman's instrument; but it pleases him for me to play, and I get to like it now one seems almost able to make it speak and tell one's feelings—sending them floating away into the air," she continued, dreamily gazing before her. "It makes one think and think, and seem to be living another kind of life; and I am away from here, Linny, sometimes, when I am playing—away where there's no noise in the streets—no shouting, shrieks, oaths, nor misery, nor dirt. "There," she said, suddenly, as if she had been brought back to the present. "I know what you are thinking."

"Indeed?" laughed Linny.

"Yes; you think I'm odd and strange in my way. Ah, I wish I was like you!"

"And sometimes," rejoined Linny, turning very serious, and stooping to pass one soft arm round the deformed girl, and bending so that her downy cheek touched the other's dark, sallow face; "sometimes, Jenny, I wish that I was like you—oh, yes, so much, so much, for I'm not happy, Jenny—not happy!"

She repeated those words in a quiet, thoughtful way, sinking at last upon her knees by the other's side, when, laying her hand—long and bony of finger—upon the bonny little head, Janet pressed it closely to her misshapen breast, from which burst sigh after sigh; till waking, as it were, from her dreamy thoughts, Linny forced a smile, and, springing up, kissed Janet again and again.

"There, what nonsense!" she cried, lightly; "I'm crying, too, and pray what about? Let's see how the gold fish are. Why, quite lively," she exclaimed, drawing Janet to the window, where, half screened by a faded curtain, the gorgeous little pets sailed round and round in their crystal prison.

"Do you ever think I am childish for liking to keep them?" said Janet, after a pause, during which, as they clung together, the two girls had been watching the fish, one of which rose to the surface, and with its little gasping lips touched lightly the pinky finger tip Linny placed beneath the water.

"Childish? No!" was the reply, as Linny again dipped a finger, to have it saluted by the fish. "I love some of the birds; but I should take them, if I could, all far away into the bright, happy country, and then open the cage-doors and set them free one by one—one by one. How they would leap and dart, and flutter, as they felt the soft air waiting for them! I often think it would be real happiness to see the little things leave off beating their breasts as they try to get out, and then to listen to them singing from some tree."

"Or else see some cruel hawk come and seize one," said Janet, bitterly.

"Heigho! perhaps, yes," sighed Linny. "There's always something to make life unhappy."

"I like the gold-fish," said Janet, without seeming to heed the sigh. "They always put me in mind of lying there—just there." And she pointed to a corner by the window. "When I was little and could not walk, but only lay there all day, with my back aching, as I stretched out my hands to touch one of the little bright things, as they so easily sailed round and round. I must have been very, very little when first he bought them to please me. But, Linny—Linny!" she exclaimed, suddenly, as she peered in the other's eyes, "what made you sigh, and say that there was always something to make you unhappy?"

Linny was silent, and gazed thoughtfully at the fish, as another, seeking the food so often given, rose and touched her finger.

"Subjects saluting their queen," said Janet, quietly.

Linny smiled.

"But what did you mean?" said Janet, again bending forward to gaze in the soft, grey eyes. "It was not because I spoke of the hawk?"

Linny shook her head.

"Well, yes—perhaps—not altogether—I don't know," she said, in a slow, hesitating way.

CHAPTER IX.—DEALING IN DORGS.

"**B**BROWNJOHN-STREET? First to the left, and second to the right. Button up your pockets," said a policeman, settling his neck in his shiny stock, and looking very hard at the inquirers, who nodded thanks, and then strolled leisurely on, the younger making loud remarks to his companion concerning the appearance of those he termed "the natives," and returning, in a cool, insolent way, the unfriendly look of divers slouching gentlemen standing at street corners, or at door-steps, to converse with slatternly girls.

Not observing that they were followed by the policeman, the inquirers took the first to the left, and the second to the right; and then, referring to a card which he took from his pocket, the younger stopped in front of D. Wragg's, looked eagerly at the dogs, and afterwards, with his companion, entered the shop.

"By Jove, Bob, where are we?" exclaimed the

first, aloud. "Look at that! who would not be a dove?"

Then, fixing his glass in one eye, he stared rudely at Linny, who, taken by surprise, stood motionless for a few moments upon a low pair of steps, with the dove she had been feeding still resting upon her hand and pecking softly at her lips.

"Allow me," said the first speaker, advancing to assist the astonished girl to descend; but in an instant she had bounded down, to stand, with heightened colour and brightened eye, at bay in one corner of the shop.

"Prudish, eh?" said the new arrival, coolly; and he took a step forward.

"Recollect yourself!" whispered a deep voice in his ear, and a heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder.

"Oh, all right," was the rejoinder; and Lionel laughed, while Garth stepped forward, and said, quietly—

"I think this is Mr. Wragg's place of business, is it not?"

Before Linny could answer, a response came from the back room.

"All right, sir—all right. I'm D. Wragg—that's my name," exclaimed a voice.

And its owner began to jerk himself forward, while, with a slight bow, Linny glanced from one to the other of the young men, and then disappeared.

"Is this the Seven Dials, Bob?" said Lionel, meaningly, "or are we at Court? But what the devil's that fellow staring at?" he exclaimed, as he turned his glass fiercely upon a lowering face glaring in at the door, as, with his hands in his pockets, the man who had been at the window stood glowering upon the two strangers.

"It's all right, gents—it's all right," exclaimed D. Wragg. "That's only Jack Screwby, and he's nobody. It's all right, gents," and he jerked his arm here and there. "There's rats, gents, aint they! There's dogs, aint they? What do you say to as nice a toy tarrier as was ever give to a lady?"

"Who is the lady that was here just this moment?" said Lionel Ambley, coolly.

D. Wragg's face changed in an instant, as, looking sharply up in the young man's face, he said, bluntly—

"We was talking about dogs, sir, wasn't us?"

For an instant Lionel was half abashed; but, seeing Garth's eye fixed upon him, he said—

"No! I want no toy terriers. Where's Luff!"

"It's all right, sir; don't make no mistake. When I say as I'll get a gent his dorg, I mean it, and—There now!" he exclaimed, with a voice of the most intense disgust; "I did think as I was dealing with gents; but I call that shabby. Jest as you like, though—I'm ready."

"What do you mean?" said Garth, for the little man had thrust his hands into his pockets, and leaned back against a parrot's cage, whose occupant began to busily employ itself upon his wiry hair.

"What do I mean? Why, didn't I give you both a hint about the suspiciousness of the gent as had the dorg—didn't I tell you what might be the consequences? Didn't I tell you as the perlice was a body

o' men as I despises, and yet you has the meanness to go and bring one along with you. That ere aint the way to get dorgs back as is lost. Don't you make no mistake, gents; and you may depend upon it as the party as that dorg follered home has gone right chock away in disgust long ago."

"Police!" exclaimed Lionel. "Why, the man's mad."

"Looks like it, don't it?" said D. Wragg, coolly. "Only don't you make no mistake. I've had dealings in dorgs afore now, gents, and I don't think as you'll find as I aint fledged."

The young men turned, as the speaker pointed towards the door, and quite gave a start as, in place of the heavy features before occupying the door-frame, they saw the inquiring countenance of a policeman peering in.

But the next moment the constable had sauntered on, muttering first the word "rats," and, after walking a few steps, "or pigeons."

Garth recognized the constable who had directed them, and, turning to the dealer, he said, quietly—

"My friend here is a gentleman, Mr. Wragg; he gave you to understand last night distinctly that he should not employ the police."

"Then what was that there bobby a-lookin' in for then?" said the dealer, in an injured tone.

"On my honour, I don't know, unless it were from curiosity," said Garth. "We asked him to direct us."

"Honour bright?" said D. Wragg, doubtfully.

"I gave you my word," said Garth, with ill-concealed contempt.

And there was something so lofty in the young man's countenance that it immediately carried with it conviction; for the dealer brightened up, and directly thrust out his hand in token of amity, and, smiling the while, Garth took it, Lionel looking on with an amused expression.

"I beg your pardon, sir—I beg your pardon. Don't you make no mistake. I aint a mean-spirited, contemptible, cageful of suspicion, I aint. I beg your pardon. That there's a honest hand, as never did nothing wuss yet than help to get a gent back his dorg to oblige a reg'lar customer. Plenty of gents trust me, and comes to me when they've had their dorgs foller other people, and I acts as mejum and commissioner, and does my best for both parties."

"Pon my soul, this grows highly amusing," said Lionel, laughing. "Why, Bob, we must have come to Court. May I ask if the young lady of the house will again be visible, so as to go through the dove performance?"

Garth looked annoyed, and D. Wragg gave Lionel a sharp, searching, sidelong glance, which the other missed.

"Let's settle the business at once," said D. Wragg. "Let me see, sir," he continued, jerking himself round the counter, "I'll trouble you for two fivers."

"But where's the dog?" said Lionel.

"Don't you make no mistake, sir; you hand over the money, and you shall have him in five minutes." Lionel hesitated for a moment, and then drew a couple of crisp notes from his pocket-book, and handed them to the dealer.

"I suppose you will give me a receipt?"

"Never put pen to paper in my life, gents, and never mean to—it's been the ruin of thousands. But you shall have a receipt for *buying* a dorg, if you like. Here, Linny, come and write out a receipt for ten pun' for these gents, while I go and see if that there party's brought the dorg."

The young girl came slowly and timidly from the back room, her face flushed, her eyes wandering from the one to the other, giving Garth the opportunity of seeing that she was really very handsome, and possessed of an innate grace and modesty of demeanour that surprised him.

She timidly took pen and paper from a drawer, and began to write, while D. Wragg jerked himself out of the door.

"Why, Bob," said Lionel, staring hard at the fair little writer the while, "depend upon it, the old chap has cut with the money, and we shall never see him again. But, never mind; he has left us a jolly little hostage, and we'll take her instead."

Garth frowned, and was silent, as he saw the shapely little head bent down over the paper.

"What a charming handwriting!" continued Lionel, in the same bantering tone, for he had seen Garth's annoyance. "What well-shaped letters! By the way, my dear, what boarding school were you at?"

The young girl's crimson face was raised to his for an instant; but her eyes fell beneath his bold stare, and she went on writing, with trembling hand.

"I shall place that receipt amongst my treasures, said Lionel, "and—"

"I think you are making a mistake, are you not?" said Garth, coldly. "Your banter is out of place, and offensive."

Lionel stared, laughed, and elevated his eyebrows, as, without bestowing upon him another glance, Linny took the slip of paper she had written, and handed it to Garth, meeting his eyes fully, as she said, in a low, sweet voice—

"Thank you, sir."

And she passed out of the shop.

CHAPTER X.—A PROPHECY.

"YOUR receipt, Lionel," said Robert Garth, quietly, as he passed the paper to his companion.

"Thanks, yes. A saucy little prude! She knows how to play her cards, and— Ah! what, Luffy, old boy! What, Luffy! Down, then—down, then! Good dog. What, you know your old master, then? There—down, down!"

"There, gents, that's about it, aint it?" said D. Wragg, stumping in after the dog, and stooping to unfasten the collar round its neck, as the delighted animal bounded up at its master, licking his hands, pawing him, and displaying his unbounded canine pleasure at the meeting. "And now, is there anything more as I can do for you gents, eh?" said D. Wragg. "A few rats for the dog—a couple o' score o' sparrers for a shot? Send 'em anywhere. Don't you make no mistake—you won't get better supplied in the Dials. Not to-day, gents? well, another time, perhaps."

"Yes, I'll give you another look in," said Lionel, gazing hard the while at Garth.

"Werry good," said D. Wragg, rubbing his hands, and jerking himself about as if on springs; "I hope you will. Gents often do come to me again when they've been once. Let me give you another card. Here, Linny, bring these gents another card."

Lionel, who had reached the door, returned, and Linny, now quiet and composed, brought out a card, but, avoiding the young man's outstretched hand, she would have given it to D. Wragg, had he not motioned her forward.

"Give it to the gentleman, my dear—don't be ashamed. Don't you make no mistake, gents; she's young, and a bit shy."

Linny did not look up as the card was taken from her hand; after which she stood busying herself about her birds until the young men had passed out of the shop.

"That's a good dorg, gents, a good dorg," whispered D. Wragg from behind his hand, as he followed them to the door. "You'd better keep a sharp hy on him. I've got my bit of commission out of this job; but, honour bright, gents, as gents I don't want to see you here again arter the bull-tarrier—not just yet, you know—not just yet. Good day, gents—good day!"

"Bye-bye, old chap," said Lionel, lightly, as they strolled on. "Wish we'd bought a chain and collar, Bob. I shouldn't like to lose old Luff again in this abominable maze. Let's go back."

"No, no—there is no need," said Garth, hastily. And then, flushing slightly at the eagerness he had displayed, he continued, firmly, "If you'll take my advice, Li, you will go there no more."

"Perhaps not, Bob," said the young man, eyeing him sidewise. "Perhaps not. But don't you make no mistake," he continued, mimicking the voice and action of the man they had just left, "I may want a toy tarrier for a lady, or a few rats, or a score or two of sparrers, or—eh, Bob?—to see the lady go through the dove performance. Don't you make no mistake, Bob, for it's quite within the range of probability that I may go there often."

"*Perhaps once too often!*" said Garth.

"Perhaps so," said Lionel.

And then he returned the fierce look bestowed on him by the heavy young man of the sleeved waistcoat, nodded familiarly to the policeman, and, coolly and insolently returning every loiterer's stare, he passed on out of the Seven Dials region—homeward bound.

CHAPTER XI.—SUNDRY AND DIVERS.

IT was very evident that Mrs. Winks was busy in the lower regions of Brownjohn-street, for the smoke and steam of her copper altar, erected to the goddess of cleanliness, rose through the house of D. Wragg, to be condensed in dew and clamminess upon handrail and paint. It was the incense that rose thickly to the nostrils when she stuck in a wooden probe to fish up boiling garments for purification sake.

The inhabitants of D. Wragg's dwelling, however, took but little notice of Mrs. Winks's washing days, unless it were D. Wragg himself; who, when some

bird would sneeze and evince a dislike to the odorous moist vapour, called to mind the death of three valuable cochins by croup—a catarrh-like distemper which, with or without truth, he laid to the charge of Mrs. Winks's washing.

So that good lady busied herself over what she called her own and Monsieur Canau's "toots," meaning thereby divers calico under-garments, till her playbill curl-papers grew soft in the steam.

Mrs. Winks was interrupted but once, when, roused by the plunging-in of the copper-stick, and an extra cloud from the sacrifice, D. Wragg stamped with his heavy boot upon the shop-floor, and shouted an inquiry as to how long Mrs. Winks would be before she was done.

To this query the stout lady returned the very vague response of "Hours."

For D. Wragg was now shop-minding, and, as he called it, busy—that is to say, he was going over his stock; stirring up sluggish birds with a loose perch; administering pills, composed of rue and butter, to sickly bantams, which sat in a heap, with feathers erect, and refusing to be smoothed down.

Here and there he would pin a newspaper before the cage of some newly-captured finch, fighting hard to escape by breasting its prison bars, beating its soft, round bosom bare of feathers against the cruel wire, but with a fair prospect before it of finding release for its restless spirit, if not for its body; and flight—where?

Then there were the "tarriers" to look after, some of which emulated their name in not finding customers.

Here D. Wragg seemed quite at home, looking as he stooped and tightened a chain here, or shortened a string there, much like one of the breed Darwinized, and in a state of transition.

His ministrations were needed; for since Linny had left the shop to his care there had been sundry audacious commotions amongst the dogs. One slight skirmish had ended in a spaniel having an ear made more fringe-like in character.

Then these restless little animals had executed a gavotte upon their hind legs, or may be a waltz, ending in a general tangle and a sort of Old Bailey performance, caused by the twisting together of string and chain into a Gordian knot, which puzzled D. Wragg into using a knife for sword in its solution—the terriers the while lying panting, with protruding eyes, and a general aspect of being at their last gasp.

At last, though, the canine fancy were reduced to order, so far as was possible; for chained-up dogs are always moved by a restless spirit to reach something a few inches beyond their nose—canine examples, indeed, of human discontent; and if small and restless of breed, hang themselves, upon an average, about twelve times per diem—possibly without suicidal intent, though from their miserable state one cannot avoid suspicions.

D. Wragg had growled almost as much as his dogs as he reduced them to order; but he turned at last, to go over other portions of his stock; pinching rats' tails to make them lively; thrusting a hand down the stocking nailed over the hole in the top of the sparrow-cage, and taking out one panting, black-

cravatted cock-bird from amongst its scores of fellows, to find it bare of breast, and half-closed of beady eye, dying fast, and so escaping the sportive shot of the skilled marksman in some "sweepstakes"—so many birds each, shot from the trap."

D. Wragg did not like waste; and, taking the half-dead bird to one corner, he opened the cage wherein—fixed and glaring of its yellow eye—sat a kestrel, which sluggishly dropped from its perch, and—with a good deal of unnecessary beating of its pointed wings—seized the hapless chirruper in one quartet of yellow claws, returned to its seat, and then and there proceeded to strip the sparrow, sending a few light, downy feathers into the cage of its neighbour—a staring barn-owl—which had opened its eyes for a few minutes, but only to blink awhile before subsiding into a ball of feathers.

A pair of bullfinches were then roused by a finger drawn rapidly across the cage bars—the effect being decidedly startling. The next object upon which the dealer's eye fell being a disreputable-looking, ragged-coated grey parrot, busily engaged in picking off its feathers, as if, out of spite for its imprisonment, it wished to render itself as unsightly and unsaleable as possible.

"You're a beauty—you are," growled D. Wragg, poking at it viciously with the perch; but, nothing daunted, the bird seized the end of the assailing weapon with its strong hooked beak, and held on, fiercely screaming a loud defiance the while.

With a dexterous jerk, though, the stick was withdrawn—a strategical movement evidently taken by the bird as a token of defeat; for it stood upon one leg, derisively danced its head up and down, and then loudly cried out, "Quack—quack—quack!" an accomplishment acquired of a couple of London-white Aylesbury ducks located in a small green dog-kennel, whose door was formed of an old half-worn fire-guard.

Apparently satisfied, D. Wragg withdrew to a corner which he specially affected, and turned his back to door and window, while he drew forth his dirty pocket-book, and carefully examined the two crisp bank-notes, replaced them, and buttoned them up in his breast-pocket, as he muttered, softly—

"More yet, my lad, more yet. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if you turned out a bit of a mint to some of us afore we've done with you. And why not?" he muttered again, as he glanced uneasily over his shoulder. "What's the good of money to such as him?"

D. Wragg frowned, as he proceeded to refresh himself with another pipe, and a renewed spelling over of his paper.

"I'm going upstairs now, father," cried Linny's pleasant silvery little voice from the back room.

"All right, my dear," was the reply.

When a light step was heard, and the closing of a door, and the next minute Linny was upstairs, where Janet was watching her goldfish.

The latter turned as soon as she saw her friend, and, reading trouble in her face, she wound her arm round her waist, and drew her closer to her.

"I came down to the shop," she said, "but you were writing something there, so I came back; but I don't like you to be left there alone, dear."

Linny did not answer her, but stood dreamy and thoughtful.

"Are you keeping something from me?" said Janet, reproachfully.

"No, no, no," said Linny, starting, and smiling once more. "Come down and help me, and then we'll talk. Some one came this morning—two some ones—and they spoke to me, and—and—" Linny's face became slightly confused as she spoke—"I didn't like it," she continued; "and—and—there, what stuff am I talking! We shall have no French to-day. Come down—do, dear; and when he comes in I want him to paint a partridge's beak and legs. There, pray come down."

Janet had her arm round Linny's waist, and for a few moments she stood gazing up at her in a strange, thoughtful way. She did not speak, though; but, keeping close to her visitor, walked with her to the door, when, hand in hand, they began to descend the stairs; but only for Linny to turn back, and lead the deformed girl into the room.

"What is it—what ails you?" said Janet, gazing wonderingly at her. "Are you ill? Do you feel faint?"

"No, no—it is nothing," said Linny, dreamily.

"I don't know. Janet," she said, then, eagerly, "do you believe in fancying things?"

"Fancying things?"

"In feeling things that are to take place—in being as if something whispered to you that there was to be trouble by and by, and misery, and heartaches—that a hawk was coming to seize a miserable little weak pigeon, and tear, and tear it, till its little heart was bleeding?"

"No—stuff!" ejaculated Janet.

"I feel so," said Linny, slowly; "and sometimes I believe it. But there," she exclaimed, impetuously, "do come down."

"Riddles—talking in riddles, like people speak in their sleep," said Janet, as she wreathed her long arm round Linny; and once more they passed through the door.

"Lean on me," said Linny, lightly, as they now began to descend the stairs, but only to be met by D. Wragg, stamping and jerking up to meet them.

As the dealer came up he gazed earnestly for a moment at Linny, and there was a hesitating look upon his grotesque countenance. But he seemed to chase it away, as, with an effort, he exclaimed—

"Here, don't you make no— Here, Linny, my dear, you're wanted."

"Wanted?" said Linny, instinctively shrinking back, while Janet's dark, fierce eyes gazed from one to the other.

"Yes, wanted," said D. Wragg—"in the shop. Look alive."

"But who—who wants me?" faltered Linny, one of whose hands tightly pressed the long, bony fingers of Janet—"who wants me?"

"It's one o' them swells as come about the dorg."

CHAPTER XII.—GRIT IN THE WHEEL.

"YOU'RE precious quiet, Bob," said Lionel Ambley, as they strolled on till they reached Trafalgar-square, almost without a word having been spoken.

"I was only thinking," was the reply.

And then they again walked on in silence; for Robert Garth was indeed thinking—deeply, too—of the charge he had accepted as a means of helping independently to defray a portion of his college expenses, though principally at the wish of Sir Richard Ambley, who had known him from a boy.

But Robert Garth's thoughts were not alone upon this wise; from time to time the busy traffic of London streets faded from before him, for a vision of brightness to occupy its place—a fair young face bent towards a dove, the startled look of confusion, and the subsequent scene.

It would come, that face; try as he would to drive it from him, there it was, again and again, soft and gentle—something fairer than he had ever seen before.

He told himself that it was absurd—that he had seen hundreds of sweeter faces amidst the ladies whose society he had kept; but, all the same, he knew that he had never before felt so impressed—nay, so troubled—by aught he had looked upon.

"Could not have been acting," he muttered. "But how absurd to dwell upon it!"

He could not have analyzed his thoughts had he been asked, for they were strangely mingled; and it was not without a feeling of uneasiness that he glanced from time to time at the careless, frank-looking young fellow at his side, apparently too much occupied with his dog to heed aught besides.

Garth started, though, at length from his reverie, as the other spoke—

"See you at dinner, Bob?"

"Are you going anywhere in particular?"

"N-n-n-no," was the reply. "May, perhaps, take the dog in the park and give him a swim. Change for him, poor fellow!"

The young men parted, taking different directions, but with thoughts tending towards the same place.

Involuntarily Garth glanced over his shoulder when he had gone about fifty yards, and then he bit his lips with annoyance, for it was to encounter the sharp glance of Lionel Ambley, who was also looking back.

The young men then hurried away, each moody and frowning, and thinking that the possibility of their continuing to be dwellers beneath the same roof was hourly diminishing.

Garth would gladly have stayed, but he felt that, while being to a certain extent answerable to the father for all the son's escapades, he would really be totally unable to control him. If he would shut his eyes to the young man's every act and deed, or become a partner in them, well and good; but then, though he wanted money, he could not do that; and he strode on, each moment growing more moody in spirit—more troubled, spite of all he could do to restrain his feelings.

CHAPTER XIII.—A MEETING IN THE MAZE.

"IT'S one o' them swells as come about the dorg," said D. Wragg, accompanying his words with a great deal of pantomimic gesture.

For a while Linny shrank from the encounter; but at last, after a few answers to hurried questions given, and replied to by D. Wragg, the young girl, holding tightly by Janet's hand, descended to their

little back room, her face growing of a deeper crimson upon finding that, in place of being in the shop, the visitor had been shown in there, and was now standing with his back to the window.

The young man advanced to meet Linny on her entrance; but had scarcely had time to say, in a rather hesitating manner, that he had taken the liberty of returning to ask for a few minutes' conversation with her, when he was suddenly interrupted.

"Here's your friend come back, sir," said D. Wragg, thrusting in his head from the shop, where he had gone to respond to a summons. "I aint told him as you're here. Don't you make no mistake. But shall I ask him in, too?"

For a moment, Robert Garth's—the first visitor—face was troubled, but the next instant he had recovered himself.

"Yes, Mr. Wragg," he said, quietly—"ask him to come in."

And the rough head of the dealer was drawn back into the shop.

Then Linny's flush grew deeper, and lines began to appear in the forehead of Robert Garth, as he scrutinized her attentively; while a few words were heard in the shop, and directly after, in a cool, insolent fashion, and with a smile upon his face, Lionel Ambley sauntered in.

That smile, however, faded on the instant, as he saw who stood beside the door. The blood mounted to his boyish temples, and for a while youthful ingenuousness had the full sway.

But, directly after, he laughed it off, assuming the cool, easy ways of the man about town, and, speaking lightly, exclaimed—

"Quite a contretemps! I'm rather late in the field, it seems. I was not aware that Mr. Robert Garth was turning gay. Not the first saint who has carried the world beneath his sackcloth. Good morning, all."

"Stay," cried Garth, hastily—"stay a moment! My visit here was for the purpose of giving advice."

"Cheap; and always plenty on supply," sneered Lionel.

"Of uttering a few words of warning."

"Exactly. To practise the part of Mentor to the young people. Rather selfish, though, Bob—rather selfish. Shouldn't have thought it of you."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing—nothing at all," said Lionel, lightly. "Nothing surprising in *my* coming; but for you to be here! Oh, Bob! I'm afraid the study of the classics is making you light and wild."

It was now Garth's turn to look conscious, for his heart seemed to whisper him that the shafts let fly by his companion were not so badly aimed; and for a few moments he strove vainly for the composure he needed to carry on the wordy warfare with effect.

"Perhaps we had better bring this interview to a close," he said, at last.

For, in spite of Lionel's talk of withdrawal, he still stayed.

Garth looked round as he spoke, to find Janet's fierce dark eyes fixed upon him, as if they would read his every thought. Then, bowing to Linny, he turned as if to leave—hesitating, though, as he reached the door.

"Oh, I'm ready," said Lionel, superciliously, as he rightly interpreted the other's uneasiness. "Good morning, ladies."

Then, closely following Garth, he once more passed through the shop, followed by the head-shakings of D. Wragg, and encountering the offensive stare of the heavy young man, who now followed the friends until they had reached the streets traversed by a more respectable class of wayfarers than those who favoured the Dials.

No words were spoken; the young men walking side by side—the one careless and indifferent, the other anxious and troubled in mind, more so even than he cared to own to himself.

On reaching Lionel's chambers, a show of cordiality was kept up. They lunched, walked out, and dined together; after which, with their coffee and cigars, they sat by the open window, where Lionel, who had evidently been turning something over in his mind, suddenly exclaimed—

"I don't want to quarrel, Bob; but I've been thinking over that meeting this morning."

"Hear me first," cried Garth, almost fiercely. "You spoke in a strangely supercilious way, Lionel—a way that cuts severely; and I feel it due to myself, and to my position, to declare solemnly that my visit there was prompted by the purest motives—by a desire for the well-being of a girl who struck me as being—"

"Oh, yes, of course—I know what you would say," interrupted Lionel. "So was I, too, moved by the purest motives."

"Listen to me, Lionel," said Garth, rising. "I am not blind. I am, for all my quiet life, perhaps as worldly wise as yourself. Do not think me so simple as not to see that you have a *penchant* for that young girl. I was admitted by her father only upon my open declaration that the object of my visit was to give advice. Ask him. I told him my profession—that I was about to enter the Church."

"And gave him some good advice for himself," broke in Lionel.

"I tried to," said Garth, simply, and without heeding the other's sneer. "And now, Lionel Ambley, I ask you, as a gentleman and a man of honour, to give me your word that you will go there no more."

"Pooh! Rubbish!" exclaimed Lionel, angrily. "Do you think that I am blind—or a child—a little boy with his tutor, to be taken to task for every word and look? Perhaps we are both worldly wise—perhaps not. At any rate, I am going to bind myself by no absurd promises. Perhaps you had better go there no more yourself."

"I do not intend," said Garth, quietly.

"Frankly, then," said Lionel, hotly, "I do. I told you that I should this morning; and—By Jove, where's Luff? Why, I've not seen him since we came back. He was with me when I entered that shop the second time, I'll swear; and then all this confounded humbug put him out of my mind. There, you see," he continued, with a laugh, "I must go there again, to enlist the services of Mr. D. Wragg. Don't you make no mistake, Mr. Robert Garth—I'm not going to lose my 'dorg' if I can help it. But

there, Bob, old fellow, as I said before, I don't want to quarrel, and I'm quite out of breath with this long-winded speechifying, only don't be such a confounded saint."

Garth took a turn up and down the room.

"Here, shake hands," cried Lionel, "and let's have no more of it. Let's be off out, and see something. Where are you going?"

"To my room," said Garth, speaking very slowly and seriously, as he took the hand held out to him.

"What for?" said Lionel.

"To write to your father."

"Ha, ha, ha!—ha, ha, ha!" laughed Lionel, dashing away the other's hand, half angrily, half with a show of contempt. "Are you going to tell him that I have been a naughty boy, and to ask him to come up with a stick?"

"No," said Garth, quietly, almost sadly; "but to ask him to relieve me of my responsibility."

And then he left the room.

"A confounded prig!" cried Lionel—"he grows insufferable."

And then, throwing his half-smoked cigar from the window in his impatience, it struck a heavy-faced man, who was leaning against a lamp-post, and staring up at the window of the well-lighted room.

The man dashed his hand to his face, growled, muttered, shook his fist at the window, and then, as he stooped, picked up the piece of cigar, knocked away the few remaining sparks, and deposited it in his pocket; when he gave another glance upwards as he said, audibly—

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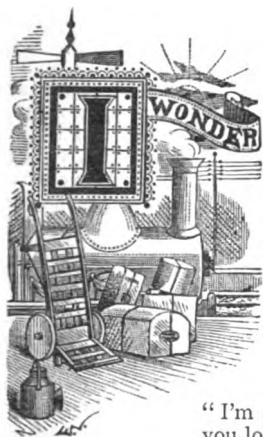
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CHAPTER XIV.—THE PARTING OF THE STAY.



WHAT things are coming to," muttered Lionel, as he lit a fresh cigar, and took a stroll up and down the room for a few moments. "Just as if one could not indulge in a little bit of innocent flirtation without being taken to task like that. No, Master Bob," he said, after another turn,

"I'm not blind either, saint as you look—Saint Anthony, if you

like. She really is uncommonly pretty, though. I liked that dove scene, too. Natural, evidently. But she can't be that rag-and-famish dog-stealer's daughter. The idea of flying out like that! Well, let him go, if he can't be a man of the world."

Robert Garth did not mutter as he went to his room, but the thoughts flashed swiftly through his brain in a way that troubled him. It was only by an effort that he composed himself to writing a calm, cool letter to Sir Richard Ambley, stating nothing relative to what had passed, but merely asking him to make fresh arrangements respecting his son, if he still wished him to have the counterpoise of a quiet companion, since it was the writer's wish to return immediately to Cambridge.

Then he sat by the open window, thinking, but not as had been his wont; for strange thoughts would intrude in spite of each angry repulse. And when at last he retired, it was not to rest, but to lie tossing in a fevered way, fighting with thoughts that he could not control.

The rising sun, as it gilded chimney-pot and housetop, finding him pale and wakeful, as he had been through the night, he rose, to sit by the open window, gazing out upon the quiet streets, clear and bright in the early morning, with hardly a wayfarer to be seen; but even the calmness of the only quiet hour in London's streets failed to bring the peace he sought.

In due course came a letter from Sir Richard Ambley, expressing his sorrow that Garth should so soon be obliged to return to the University, but wishing him all success in his studies, ending with a hope that he should see him high up in the honour list, and hinting how gratifying it would have been could he have inoculated Lionel with a little of his application.

The same morning Lionel accompanied his late companion to the Shoreditch terminus, staying upon the platform till Garth entered the carriage; and then, with rather a formal hand-shake, they parted.

The young men were not to separate, though, without Lionel sending a sharp pang through the traveller's breast, as he said, mockingly—

"Any message for the Dials?"

Robert Garth's reply was a quiet, reproachful look; but as the train glided out into the open air, he threw himself back, smiling faintly as he gazed with a newly-awakened interest at the dense and wretched neighbourhood on either hand, with its thronging population, and roofs devoted to the keeping of birds, many of which were also hung from miserable, poverty-stricken windows, whose broken panes were patched with paper or stuffed with rag.

On went the train, momentarily gathering speed, till, as he saw one iris-necked pigeon alight cooing upon a brick parapet, Robert Garth's brow wrinkled, and he compressed his lips.

An instant, and the train had glided past; the pigeon was lost to view; and, as he mused upon the sudden possession that had seemed to seize him, the young man muttered, softly—

"Study for folly; and time the cure for a mind diseased."

CHAPTER XV.—THE LOVE OF NATURE.

ROBERT GARTH had been gone three months; and, clothed in a perfect Joseph's coat of a dressing-gown, Lionel Ambley lolled upon his sofa, talking pettishly to his landlord, who stood before him, holding a slip of paper in his hand.

"Cert'nly, sir, it goes again the grain," said Mr. Still; "but what am I to do, Mr. Ambley, sir? Here's the cheque again from your pa, and there's the receipt, all as regular as the month comes round, which is more than can be said of some people with titles, and who calls themselves officers. You see, you know, sir, I rent the whole of this upper of the people who has the shop, and I'm bound not to do nothing as shall annoy them in their business."

"Bother!" growled Lionel, fidgeting about; while Mr. Still went on—

"I wouldn't part with you, sir, only you see, if so be I don't, why, they'll part with me."

"But it's a nuisance, man, and I should have to look out for fresh chambers," said Lionel; "and the place suits me. I don't want to go."

"Well, you see, sir, that's where we agree. But, you see, things can't go on like this. One dog we didn't like, but we'd say nothing about, though he don't do no good to the cushions. But look there, sir—there's your bull-terrier on the couch, your Skye wiry on the heasy chair; your spaniel under the table, as vicious as stinging nettles; and them two pugs on the hearth-rug."

Lionel made a hasty gesture.

"Can't help it, sir; it aint no good for you to be cross; I must speak. Then, there's the cunnle as has the second floor—Cunnle Martnitt, sir—says if that there parrot don't go, he will; for it's a-shrieking and swearing from morning to night. Not as I must say as ever I did hear it say anything worse than 'Corpus backus,' which may be wickedness in Greek, or some other furren tongue; like an old master of mine, who was a major in the Indian army, and came back eat up with curry and bad

liver—yellow as one of his own guineas, sir. Well, he'd swear at me, sir, hawful, I do believe, when he was a bit put out; but then, as it was all in Hindoo, and I never understood a word about what it meant, it never used to fidget me a bit more than if it was all blessings. But parrots will swear, sir, I know; for I've heard two in a cage go on at one another worse than—"

"Do you want me to set-to and swear at you, Still?" said Lionel.

"No, sir; as you'd be too much of a gentleman, I'm sure."

"Pish!" ejaculated Lionel.

"Then the cunnle says, sir, as the singin' birds is getting a perfect nuisance; but the squirrel and the ferrets, he says as he don't mind. But, now I am speaking, I must say as I do; for I put it to you, sir, are they sootable for a first-floor in Regent-street? I know what gents is, sir, having lived in good families till the wife and me retired on her savings and took to letting; and I must say, sir, as I never in all my experience see anything like this here before; while the worst of it is as we never know what's coming next. It drives my missus almost wild—it do, indeed, sir—to see that little foxy old chap with the thick boots come jigging and grinning up to the front door, as if he'd got a hingin inside to work him; and now bringing a bird, or a hannimal, or something else, to wherit us."

"Nearly done?" growled Lionel, angrily.

"Not quite, sir," said the landlord, desperately; for he had been lectured into speaking, and he knew well enough that the ear of his lecturer was at the keyhole. "You see, sir, my wife says as we must have an alteration. She says, only last night, 'James,' she says—it was after we was in bed, sir—'how do we know what Mr. Hamblar will be a-having next? He's making a regular Wombwell's Show of that drawing-room, as we shall have to refurnish as soon as ever he's gone, what with tobacco smoke, dirty feet, and wild beasts. We shall be having a helephant or a monkey next; and with a monkey in the house,' she says, 'I won't stay, for if there is a ojus thing as I can't abear it's a monkey. What does a gent like him, with his father a barynit, want with tortushes a-scrawming about the room and under your feet, and giving you a turn as sends cold shudders all down your back?'"

"Now, look here!" burst out Lionel, "I'm not going either to stand or believe all this, so I tell you. You want to raise the rent, Still. Now, that's it."

"Which it just aint nothing of the sort, Mr. Hamblar!" exclaimed a corroded voice—sharp, worn, and acid; and a new actor appeared on the scene, in the person of Mrs. Still, the landlord's lady. "I wonder, sir, at a gentleman—a nobleman's son—bemeaning himself to insult honest people in this way. We don't want the rent raised, sir; but what we do want is a halteration, or else our rooms empty, or let to some one else, as there's plenty of gents as would be glad to have them; though, if you was to go, no one would be sorrier than your humble servant."

Lionel made a gesture of dismay, throwing himself farther back upon his lounge, with every token

of succumbing to this fresh attack, as he stared grimly at the ceiling.

"You see, sir," said Mrs. Still—for her husband, literally as well as metaphorically, had now subsided into the background—"ever since Mr. Garth, as was as nice and pleasant a gent as ever walked in shoe-leather, has been gone, things has been growing worse. We aint the folks, sir, to take no notice of late hours, or smoking, or friends to supper as won't go in Hansom cabs without making a noise, and a bit of racketing now and then—of course not. We know our place, sir, and what gents is, young and old, as lives in eligibly-situated bachelor chambers, overlooking one of the best streets in the metropolis; but I put it to you, sir, as a gent of sense, is *that* right—and *THAT*—and *THAT*?"

Mrs. Still's fat finger was pointed at first one and then another quadru- or bi-ped intruder.

"Ever since Mr. Garth's been gone, sir, here you've had these things a-coming in. And now, is it right, sir? Is tortushes—six on 'em—proper things to be a-scrawming over a Brussels carpet as cost us six and six a yard, without the planning and making? And let me tell you, sir, as six-and-sixes to buy yards of carpet aint scraped out of the gutters; let alone the other expenses of furnishing a house, with upholsterers and furniture shops thrusting veneer down your throat when you go in for solid; and if, to save your money, you go to one of the auction rooms, you're a'most ragged to pieces by the Jew brokers; and if you won't employ 'em, them a-running up things and bidding against you shameful. Furnishing a house don't mean marrying a lady and putting her in it, I can tell you, Mr. Hamblar, sir; and when it's your own Brussels as you're a-walking on, and your own sofas as you sit on, you won't destroy 'em with all sorts of nasty filthy animals, as is that full of insecs as makes it miserable to come in the room."

"Now, look here!" exclaimed Lionel, whose countenance wore a comical aspect of trouble and despair—"look here!" he exclaimed, starting up, "I don't want to go—I don't want the trouble. There: I'll promise you I won't buy any more—will that suit you?"

But the long-suffering Mrs. Still was now fully roused, and determined to hold the ground which she had gained. She said, and very justly, that she could not afford to go on upon such terms, as the result must be notice to quit from their own landlord. She was determined now to have a thorough clearance, or Mr. "Lynel Hamblar" must get apartments where people did not mind having their rooms made into a "wild beast show."

This being the climax of Mrs. Still's speech, that lady flounced out of the room—the centre of an aerial vortex raised by her voluminous garments—leaving Lionel Ambley and his landlord staring very hard at one another.

"I say, you know, what's to be done?" said the young man, at last.

Mr. Still shook his head as solemnly as a beadle welcoming a fully-furnished funeral; when, leaping up angrily, and to his landlord's great astonishment, Lionel threw up the window, and then, but not without some difficulty, set at liberty the whole of

his birds—the parrot rewarding him for his kindness by nipping a piece out of one finger.

"There, now," said Lionel, binding a handkerchief round his bleeding finger, after directing a blow right from the shoulder at the offending parrot, which, it is hardly necessary to say, missed its aim—"there, now, take those empty cages away, and send your girl to sweep up the bits."

Mr. Still winked to himself as he obeyed, and rattled out of the room with quite a load of cages, but only to return at the end of five minutes.

"Well," said Lionel, inquiringly, "what now?"

"About them there ferrets, sir?" said Mr. Still.

"Oh, take them away, by all means," said Lionel, impatiently.

"Yes, sir, in course; but what shall I do with them?"

"Wring their necks—sell them—send them down the drains after the rats," exclaimed Lionel.

And the wire-fronted box containing the furry, snaky animals was carried down; but only for Mr. Still to return at the end of ten minutes, hot, hen-pecked, and nervous, to encounter Lionel's savage glances.

"Well, what next?" cried Lionel to the troubled ambassador, who, open to receiving both fires, had now come charged with a message which he hardly dared to deliver.

CHAPTER XVI.—A CLEAN SWEEP.

"NOW, then," said Lionel Ambley, "what next?"

After the sweep made of birds and cages, Mr. Still felt that it was rather dangerous work to ask for further concessions, and therefore he remained silent, until the young man fiercely repeated his question.

"Please, sir, there's them tortushes," said Still, hesitating.

"Confound the tortoises!" cried Lionel. "Give them to some of the street boys." And moving to the window, he hailed a doctor's boy passing with his medicine basket. "Catch, my lad!" he shouted. And he threw him down, one after the other, three of the sluggish little reptiles, with heads and legs drawn within their shells, to be out of danger. "Now I hope you are satisfied," he exclaimed to his landlord, who, after a good hunt, had contrived to discover, in out-of-the-way corners, the other three offenders.

Mr. Still's only response was a shake of the head—a motion kept up until he reached the lower regions, from whence he returned more hot and flustered than ever, to be greeted with a storm of abuse from his angry young tenant.

No, he would not give up the dogs—that he wouldn't, and Mr. Still might go and tell his wife so. He had already thrown away above thirty pounds' worth of things to satisfy them. He gave twelve pounds for that parrot, he said, and now they wanted him to part with his dogs. Why, he had only got back the bull terrier after paying ten pounds for him one day and five the next, through losing it in the Dials, let alone the heavy sums he had paid for the others. Part with his dogs? No, that he wouldn't, so there was an end of it; and if Mr. Still

came bothering him again, hang him if he wouldn't serve him as he had served the tortoises.

There might have been an end of it so far as Mr. Still was concerned; but when he was sent back to the kitchen he soon returned to the drawing-room, with fresh diplomatic charges, which he delivered in spite of the window-throwing threat; but only to be sent back with new propositions, yet with no better fortune; and this time he was followed by the irate landlady herself—hot, out of breath, and voluminous in her discourse.

And now the wordy warfare recommenced, charge after charge being made by Mrs. Still to the discomfiture of Lionel Ambley, till a truce had been agreed upon: the young tenant was to retain his chambers on condition that he bought no more "wild beasts" or birds, so Mrs. Still put it, and did not, as, one by one, the four dogs he was allowed to keep were lost, either try to recover them, or supply their places with fresh favourites.

"Confound the pair!" cried Lionel, as they left the room.

And, according to custom, he proceeded to solace himself with a cigar.

"I don't care," exclaimed Mrs. Still, as she reached her best kitchen, and sat down panting, "we ought to have persevered, and then we should have had the house clear of his rubbish. How do we know how long the silly young noodle, all money and no brains, will be before he loses even one of his dogs?"

"Don't you fret about that," laughed her husband; "that won't be long first. Why, he never hardly goes out now without some ill-looking vagabond dodging him; and there's one in particular follows him home as regular as clockwork. Do you think he's always slinking about for nothing? Not he. You wait a bit, and you'll see."

CHAPTER XVII.—MUTTERINGS.

D. WRAGG was out on business down by the docks. He had left home directly after breakfast, telling his lodger, the little Frenchman, that he was "good to buy five hundred of zebras, or a hundred of greys, or a miscellaneous assortment of anything fresh brought over," and he tapped his breast-pocket as he spoke, winking, and jerking himself up and down. "Dessay I could find a customer for a monkey if I brought one home."

A sharp glance was directed at Linny by Janet as the dealer spoke—for she had descended with her foster-parent—when Linny's white forehead grew contracted.

"Coming back," said D. Wragg, "I shall see about the four-wheeler, so as we can go down comfortable. What time shall we start?"

He looked at Linny as he spoke, but she was thoughtful and silent—starting back, though, into the present upon being again addressed.

"All right, then," said D. Wragg, "to-morrow morning, directly after breakfast—say half arter eight, and that will be nine, and you and Mother Winks will be sure and get a basket all ready."

D. Wragg took his departure, after an affectionate glance all round at the birds and the rest of his stock-in-trade; while the little Frenchman stood

lighting his cigarette with the match handed to him by Linny.

"You will stay with Linny?" he said to Janet.

"Yes; but you will be back in an hour to paint the birds?"

"Good, yes; in one hour."

And raising his hat, he replaced it—old and pinched of brim—very much on one side, and sauntered out.

The two girls, left now alone, stood silently in the shop for a few moments, and then entered the back room, where, in a quiet, preoccupied manner, Linny commenced arranging cardboard, gum, and various packets of feathers upon the table, an operation interrupted by a loud tapping upon the shop counter.

Linny turned to answer the summons, but on reaching the glass door she started back, looking pale and anxious.

"Oh, pray go," she whispered to Janet, whose dark eyes were fixed maliciously upon her.

"So, it is the gay cavalier, is it?" laughed Janet, in a harsh, angry fashion.

"No, no," whispered Linny; "but that dreadful man. He follows me, and always comes to the shop when he thinks I am alone."

"I'll answer him," said Janet, fiercely. And then, in a whisper, "Should you have sent me if it had been some one else?"

Linny's sole reply was a look of reproach—one, though, that spoke volumes—as the deformed girl left the room, to encounter the heavy, surly-voiced young man, who, upon being sharply asked what he wanted—

"Didn't quite know. Perhaps it were a bird, or it might be a ferret; but he wasn't quite sure. How-so-be, she didn't understand them sort of things, he was sure of that. Where was the other one? Oh, she was busy, was she? Then p'raps he'd call again."

After which the heavy gentleman loitered slowly out of the shop, to hang about the window, glancing in at the birds, and chewing straws.

"He's gone!" said Janet, returning to the room. "He's a hideous wretch—ugly as I am. Such impudence! He did not want to buy anything. You are a little coward."

"Yes," sighed Linny, "I am—I know I am. Ah, Janet," she sighed, after a while, "I wish I was a lady."

"For the sake of the gay cavalier, of course," laughed Janet, sneeringly; and then she looked angrily across at her companion, who, bent lower and lower over her work, whispering to herself—

"She won't believe me; she won't believe me."

And then Linny's fingers grew very busy indeed over her work, as she nimbly arranged the wing, tail, back, and breast feathers of a partridge with gum, upon a stiff piece of card, following, with an accuracy learned of the birds amongst which she had so long dwelt, the soft curves and graceful swellings of the natural form, making up pair after pair of ornaments, which, when finished off by Monsieur Canau and mounted, were disposed of by D. Wragg at a profitable rate.

Punctual to his time, the little Frenchman returned, and, quite at home, sauntered into the room.

"Good girls, good girls," he said, lightly. "Now

the colours and the brush. Did the Madame Vinks bring the music she said she would borrow from the *chef d'orchestre*? No? Ah! then, but I am disappointed, and must wait. P'tite Reine, that bird is too big—round—plump—too much like the Madame Vinks; but we will paint his beak and leg. He does look fit for the *chef*—the cook—and not for the ornament."

Then, taking up cakes, first of one colour, then of another, he moistened a camel's-hair pencil in the gum, and, with the skill of a finished artist, gave the finishing touches—beak—eyes—legs—to the young girl's work.

In the midst of the operation, though, there was again the sound of steps in the shop.

Linny rose and left the room, while, with bent head, but flashing eyes and distended nostrils, Janet sat watching to catch the slightest word.

And eager whispered words those seemed to her to be, but replied to only in monosyllables; and, at last, when she raised her head and gazed through the open door, she winced as if she had been struck, on seeing a be-ringed hand stretched across the counter, and tightly holding one of Linny's little white palms.

Janet did not heed that the young girl seemed to be vainly trying to release that hand, as she stood right back against the cages at the side of the shop.

It was a bright, hot summer day, with window and door open, so as to catch every wandering breeze that had lost itself in the vast maze of bricks and mortar; and, as Janet had that one glance in the shop, the door of communication banged loudly, and her view was cut short.

For a moment the dark girl's face was contracted by pain; then a fierce, malicious look swept over it, as she rose to re-open the door.

"No, no—no, no, *mon enfant*; let the door rest," said Monsieur Canau. "Wait till I have finished this one bird. Linny will be here directly."

Janet shrank back into her chair—craning her neck, though, forward, as she tried to make out the words that were spoken. Her teeth gnawed her lip, and her nails seemed to be pressed into her hands, while the twitching of her wide nostrils told of the agitation that moved her so strongly.

Twice she made as though to leap up, determined not to bear longer the restraint put upon her, but only to subside again into her eager listening attitude, as Monsieur Canau still painted on, humming softly an operatic air the while, as from time to time he stood to watch the progress of his work.

He was evidently totally ignorant of that which took place in the shop, his occupation for the time being completely filling his mind, so that neither did he notice the agitation of Janet, which grew each moment more marked and decided in character.

At last Janet sprang sharply up, and walked towards the door, but only to be stayed by Canau.

"A moment, little one," he said—"the Indian ink is not here. Reach it down for me from the closet."

With trembling hands, Janet crossed to the cupboard, and strove to find the cake of paint; but it was beyond her reach, and she had to take a chair before she could find it and return to the table.

"Good. Now mix me a little upon that saucer—not too much."

Janet obeyed without a word, and still Canau did not observe her agitation.

At last, though, she was free; and with eyes glittering she made towards the door, just as she could hear now some hurried words, uttered in a low tone, as if some one was pleading importunately.

Then a few hurried, broken sentences followed, and one of the cages was slightly moved from its place.

Another moment, and Janet's hand was upon the fastening of the glass door, and she had thrown it open in time to see Linny's drawn farther and farther over the counter, in spite of her resistance; and there it was held.

There were words—again hurried, eager words—a faint cry of remonstrance, and then Linny's little hand was snatched away, and she rushed, hot and excited, into the room.

"Aha! there, mind, my child," said Canau; "but you will make the feathers fly. What is it? Has one of the little dogs got loose, and have you hunted him? Eh? Then, *ma foi*, but you are hot and red-faced, and angry. Has any one dared— But what is this?"

Monsieur Canau uttered this last query in fierce tones; for, following rapidly upon the entrance of Linny, there was the dislodging of a cage or two, the rattle of some chains, and a general fluttering amongst D. Wragg's stock-in-trade, as Lionel Ambley, in full pursuit, forced his way into the room.

CHAPTER XVIII.—LIONEL'S CHECK.

"THERE! I told you I would," cried Lionel, who had hurried round the end of the counter, but not quickly enough to arrest the fleeing girl. "You know I met D. Wragg—"

He stopped short, upon finding himself face to face with Monsieur Canau, who, reading at a glance, from Linny's flushed and troubled face, the meaning of her retreat, started angrily to his feet, saying—

"Monsieur is in error; he makes a mistake. This room is private, and he will instantly retire."

Taken by surprise, and half-abashed for a moment, Lionel shrank from the shabby little figure before him.

For the Frenchman, sallow and seamed of countenance, appeared to brighten up, and his breast to swell, as he stepped towards the intruder.

But Lionel's discomfiture did not last a minute. Waiting until Canau was close up to him, he exclaimed—

"And, pray, who the deuce are you?"

"Who am I, sir?" exclaimed Canau fiercely; "I, sir, am a gentleman—the protector of these ladies. In my country, sir—in La France—it is not money, but birth and the habits of a gentleman, that serve to make the aristocrat. You are in error, sir; and you will directly leave this room."

Lionel was perfectly astounded, and each moment he grew more confused, hardly knowing whether to be amused or to think that he was in some other part of the world.

Was he dreaming? he asked himself, or was this the Seven Dials?

But his short reverie was made even shorter, as, quite in an agony, Janet clung to Canau's hand, whispering, imploringly, as she gazed in his face—

"Oh! for my sake, pray, hush! Do not be angry," she whispered.

"Hush, hush! my little one!" said the Frenchman, softly, a most benignant aspect overspreading his poor, worn countenance. "Be not afraid—it is nothing. You, sir," he continued, calmly turning to Lionel, "you are young, and you make mistakes. In my country, satisfaction would have been asked; but this is not La France; and I forget. But monsieur will leave at once."

In spite of himself, angry even at what he called his weakness, Lionel felt that he was overmatched by his little adversary. He felt that they were standing upon different bases; and that, while the one occupied by the Frenchman was solid and substantial, his own was rotten and untrustworthy. Above all, too, it would keep striking him as being startling that there, in that low, wretched street, which he told himself he had sought for the purpose of carrying on a vulgar amour, one should start up with all the grand courtesy of a gentleman of the old *régime*, to rebuke him and to call him to account for his flagrant breach of etiquette, where he had told himself that the usages of society might be slighted.

He could do no other; and at last, stepping over the threshold, half-laughing, half-bewildered, he suffered himself to be backed into the shop, and thence to the door—Monsieur Canau putting on his hat as he progressed, but only to raise it with grim courtesy to the young man, who, frowning and humbled, involuntarily raised his own before walking fuming away.

"This young man—this foolish boy—do you encourage him to come here, Linny?" said Monsieur Canau, angrily, as he returned to the room, to find the young girl in tears.

His answer was a shake of the head, as Linny came forward, and placed both her little hands in his, looking piteously in his face the while.

"It is well," he said, nodding his head many times, "and I am not angry. But this must not be; he must be stopped; he must come here no more."

He paused, for a loud sob from Janet took his attention; and, turning, he found her face buried in her hands, as she bent down, weeping bitterly.

"Poor child!" said Canau, tenderly, "she is soon alarmed. The scene has been too much; but we will go back to our own room, and have some music. It will greatly soothe and calm this troubled spirit. But no—not so: we must wait until he returns—we must wait for the *père* Wragg; and Linny, my child, when we are not here, let the good Madame Vinks be with you. It is not right for you to be alone. Janet here, too, must be more than ever your companion. But she is poor and tremulous. Enough, though, of this; we will stay till he returns. And now, once more—the work!"

Turning to the painting, he sketched on, as if nothing had happened, conversing lightly in French, the two girls speaking the language with a purity of accent that might have been listened to with envy,

till, seeing once more that the tears would flow, Canau raised his brows slightly, shrugged his shoulders, rolled up and lit another cigarette, and strolled into the shop, muttering, as he left the girls to the enjoyment of their happiness—

"But this must be stopped; he must come here no more."

Very thoughtful was Monsieur Canau, as he stood in the shop, his gaze lighting, here and there, upon bird, beast, or fish. But he saw them not, for his mind was filled with the recollection of the incidents of that morning, and his seamed countenance grew more full of line and pucker as he sent the blue vapour from his cigarette eddying out upon the air in furious puffs.

Then he walked to the door, to look up and down street to see if D. Wragg was on his way back, considering, at the same time, within himself what he should say to the dealer. Then he wondered whether it was the little man's work that Lionel Ambley was there so often; and he frowned again and again as the thoughts came thick and fast.

But, at last, muttering to himself these words—"He must come here no more," he was about to turn into the house, when he became aware of a low, surly face close to him, apparently watching his every motion.

CHAPTER XIX.—WRAGG'S DAY OUT.

IF there's one thing more loved of your genuine Londoner than shell-fish, it is what he calls an "outing."

We leave it to the statistician to decide upon the number of bushels of whelks boiled and consumed, after deposition in little white saucers, and peppering with dust; the loads of mussels, the great spongy-shelled oysters, and the barrows and baskets full of periwinkles stewed in Billingsgate or Columbia coppers, sold in "ha'porths," wriggled out with pins, and then luxuriated upon—while we turn to outing.

Outing—whether it be by rail, boat, 'bus, van, or the various paintless, age-dried, loose-tired, non-descript vehicles forced into requisition for the purpose.

They are not particular, these Londoners, where or how they go; the very fact of there being the fresh air, green trees and sunshine that they miss at home is sufficient; and all ye who dwell upon suburban roads can attest to the air of tired satisfaction to be seen in the faces of many of those who come wearily back after that hardest of hard days' work—an outing. Tired, but happy all the same, and bearing now flowers, perhaps only lilac or hawthorn, later on in the season bunches of green or ripening corn, treasures to be placed in water, or suspended dry over glass or picture, to bring back, for months to come, the recollection of the bright day spent in the country.

The four-wheeler of which D. Wragg had spoken was at the door—a very shabby, sun-blistered, green vehicle, whose appearance suggested a thorough knowledge of every road out of London. It was the kind of carriage that, give it motive power, would be sure to find its own way home, in spite even of an obstinate horse; or to stop, of its own accord, at roadside public-houses, for its drawer and occupant

to drink, while it rested its creaking springs and jangling iron, fetching its breath for another dusty run, as it longed for one of those wayside horse-ponds, through which it might be driven, to the easement of its thirsty joints and badly-fitted wheels, always now disposed to moult their spokes, which rattled musically in their freedom from paint.

The four-wheeler was drawn by a curved-nosed beast of an angular nature, whose character was written in his sleepy eye and bended knees, worn by contact with hard or dusty roads. His vertebræ stood up like a minor chain of Andes, extending from his mangy neck to the table-land dominating the cataract-like tail of scrubby hair. In short, he was a horse of a most retiring aspect, whose presence caused dogs to sniff, and cats to run a red rag-like tongue over their white teeth and skinny lips, as they thought of the barrow and the three small slices upon a skewer.

Mrs. Winks was in a state of moist and shiny excitement. She had already placed a fair-sized flat basket beneath the seat, and quite destroyed the appearance of her print apron by rolling it up and folding it into fidget-suggested plaits.

But it was with no envious eyes that Mrs. Winks gazed; for London, she said, was quite big enough for her, and contained all she wanted. Them as liked might go into the country for her, which she was quite sure could show no such flowers, fruits, or vegetables as Common Garding.

She liked to see others enjoy themselves, though; and her face beamed with good humour as she held a chair for Janet to stand upon and climb to her seat, when Canau led her out with as great care and courtesy as if she had been a duchess of the French Court.

For Janet's was the place of honour beside D. Wragg, who was already seated, and making the angular horse toss its head in response to the unnecessarily-jerked reins.

Then came Linny's turn to be helped into the back seat—a bright little blossom, in a cloud of white muslin—and Canau took his place by her side, both he and D. Wragg being perfectly stiff in the board-like white waistcoats, got up for them expressly by Mrs. Winks.

This lady received divers admonitions respecting the administration of more water to the stock-in-trade; and a stern order "not to make no mistake; but if that party came about the little spinnacle, it warn't the same, and he'd best call again."

"Hooray, give's a copper, guv'nor," shouted a small boy, as D. Wragg now energetically jerked the reins, and cried "P'st!" and "Go on, then!" for the horse would not move, evidently considering that D. Wragg had cried "Wolf!" in his previous jerkings of the reins; but at last the brute ambled off slowly, only, though, to be checked at the end of a half a dozen yards, for his driver to shout to Mrs. Winks—

"Here, I say! them there sparrers. I won't let 'em go at the price Pogles offered. Don't you make no mistake; I don't get my sparrers for nothing—p'st!"

They went on a few yards farther, but only for D. Wragg to recall something else, which made

him pull up short and wave Mrs. Winks forward with the whip.

"I didn't give them there bantams their mixer, this mornin', and their combs is white as lather. Give 'em a few drops in their water."

"Now, do go on, there's a good soul," cried Mrs. Winks, impatiently; "just as if I couldn't mind the place as well as you!"

"I don't think as there's anything else I want to say," said D. Wragg, rubbing his nose—what there was of it—with the shaft of his whip.

"No; I shouldn't think there was," said Mrs. Winks, pettishly; "so now go on."

Mrs. Winks turned to reach the shop; but she was calculating too much, for D. Wragg did not set her at liberty until he had called and recalled her to the very end of the street, to warn her about the rats, about that there pair of fancy rabbits, and, lastly, to tell her to be sure and not forget about the spannie.

"Now, don't you make no mistake about that there dorg, for that there's the particularest part of it all."

"There, drat the man, what does he mean, dragging me away like this?" puffed the dame, fiercely.

And, heedless of a shouted order sent flying after her as the four-wheeler turned the corner, she made her way back to the shop, while D. Wragg urged on his horse—working hard at his driving, so as to reach the country for a day of pleasure.

The pleasure was in anticipation; but there was a shade on the brow of both girls, as they already felt the coming of what was to be to one a stroke that should make a tender heart to ache with bitter misery, to bring forth confession upon confession, and to waken both to the fact that there are dreams of the day as well as dreams of the night—dreams of our waking moments as well as dreams when the body is steeped in sleep.

But, now, they were still in the Dials, with D. Wragg—no very skilful driver—urging on his horse, as he applied the whip and jerked the reins, telling it "not to make no mistake, for he was behind it."

"Come on, will you?" cried D. Wragg, to increase the speed. Result:—

The angular horse wagged its tail.

CHAPTER XX.—OUT OF THE HEART.

ON went the horse, stumbling along slowly, bowing his head in sympathy with a halting leg; and on they went through the streets, the least frequented being chosen by D. Wragg, who was suffering from want of confidence in himself as a driver.

On still, past the parts to where the shops began to look new, but blighted as to trade; where the houses were more thinly scattered, until they had attained to their object of being in the country, where the horse was allowed to take its own pace.

It was not a pleasant pace; for there was, when he went slowly, too much turning of the head and dragging along of one of the hind legs, while, when apparently startled to find that he was doing but little more than keep up with the pedestrians on either side of the road, he started off for a hundred yards in a sharper trot, it was made unmusical by

the "clink, clink" of shoe against shoe as the poor brute overstepped itself.

But in spite of these failings the party in the four-wheeler seemed perfectly content, for they were progressing. Suburban residences, with their pleasant green parterres and shrubberies, were gliding by them on either hand, so that there was always something new; and, besides, were they not leaving behind the misery, the dirt, and squalor of the Dials?

Learned in such matters, by his connection with the bird-fancying and catching professions, D. Wragg had made up his mind to the most country spot he knew within easy range of London, the result being that at mid-day the party were dining *al fresco* in the pleasantly-wooded region beyond Woodford Bridge; and then, in the afternoon, Linny and Janet were wandering hand and hand, children once more in thought, along by sweet hedgerow and waving corn.

Now they rested for awhile upon some stile, to listen to the familiar note of a bird, which seemed more joyous here, though, in a state of freedom; now pausing to mark the busy hum of insect life; then wandering on again, speaking little, but revelling in the sweetness of the country—doubly dear to these prisoners of the great city.

It was their way of enjoying these trips. D. Wragg, for his part, taking solitary rambles for the purpose of combining profit with pleasure—clearing his "ex's" he called it—by hunting out suitable spots for his bird-catching clients, by the side of shady grove or upon some pleasant common, where feathered prey might be inveigled and melted down into silver.

Canau, on his side, would take his thoughtful walks about, with his little screwed-up cigarette—it being an understood thing that at a certain hour they were all to meet at the little inn where the horse was resting, partake of an early tea, and then face homeward.

Pleasant fields, with here and there a farmhouse or villa, with its closely-shaven lawn and trimly-kept garden rich in floral beauties; but presenting no greater attraction to the two wanderers than did hedge and bank rich with darkening leaf, berry, and flower. And on they strolled, both very quiet and thoughtful, forgetting D. Wragg, Canau, and Babel itself, in the enjoyment of the present.

Passing slowly along—picking a harebell or scabious here, a cluster of sweet honeysuckle or the buglos there—Linny and Janet wandered over the roadside grass, their steps inaudible, till they reached a high hedge and evergreen plantation, which separated them from the grounds of a pleasant residence, upon whose lawn a party was assembled, apparently engaged in some out-door pastime.

They were so close that the voices were easily distinguishable: the light, happy laugh of maidenhood mingled with the deeper tones of their companions.

Now and then, too, through the trees, the light, floating drapery of more than one fair girl could be made out as it swept over the soft lawn.

At first little notice was taken by Linny and Janet; but suddenly, upon hearing a remark to which a merry, laughing, response was given, the former

stopped short, to crimson, and then turn pale, as she dropped the flowers which she had gathered.

She stood perfectly motionless, as a laughing, girlish voice exclaimed—

"No, no; it's Mr. Garth's turn now—he's my partner."



"Garth, Robert Garth, why don't you come?" exclaimed a man's voice; "why, I declare if he isn't proposing to Miss Rawlinson!"

Linny was pressing forward, parting the leaves with one hand, heedless of the thorns which pricked and tore her soft fingers, before she was able to obtain a passing glance of dark, study-paled Robert Garth, rising with a smile from the feet of a young lady seated upon a garden-chair—a maiden, who, at that distance, seemed to Linny to be very beautiful in her light flowing drapery, and framed, as it were, in the soft verdure around.

Then the listeners' ears were saluted by a merry burst of laughter, drowning the expostulating tones of a man's voice; while, with bleeding hands—aye, and bleeding heart—head bent, and the tears running down from her great grey eyes, Linny turned, and staggered away, closely followed by Janet, who, taking her arm, hurried her along, till, coming to a stile, they sat down beside the softly undulating corn.

The stillness was great around, only broken, as it was, by the cawing of a colony of rooks amongst some distant elms.

"Oh, Linny! Linny, darling!" whispered Janet, taking the bended head to her breast.

When, giving way to the desolation of her young heart, in the trouble that seemed to have come over her so suddenly, Linny wept long and bitterly, awakened as she was so rudely from a dream, in which, almost unknown to herself, she had begun to indulge.

"Oh, Linny, Linny," softly whispered Janet again, as, down upon her knees, she rocked the little head

that rested against her to and fro—hushing her as though she had been a child; while she bent over her, to say, "And I thought so differently—so differently."

"Let us go—let us go away from here," sobbed Linny, after vainly struggling to repress her feelings.

"Not yet—not yet," said Janet, as she played with the hair which fell upon her breast. "There is no one to see us here, and you are not yet fit for people to look at you. You must not think me cruel if I say I am glad to see you suffer—glad your poor breast can be torn and troubled, for I thought so differently, little one—and that it was the gay, handsome boy who had stolen the little heart away; for I knew—I knew—I've known—that there was something wrong for weeks and weeks; and I've been angry and bitter, and hated you. For, Linny—Linny," she cried, passionately, hiding now her own swarthy face, "if he would but take me, to beat me, or to be as his dog that he fondles so—to wait upon him—to be his slave—I could be happy. You don't know—you cannot tell—the misery, the wretchedness of such a heart as mine. Do you think I am blind? Do I not know that he would laugh and jeer at me? Would he not think me mad for looking up at him?" she cried, passionately, as she struck her face—her bosom—cruelly, with her long, bony fingers. "Do you think I don't know what a toad I am—how ugly and foul I must be in the eyes of men? And still I have a woman's heart; and, though I have tried not to, I love and worship his bold, insolent face. I could almost have died again and again for one of those—only one of those—sweet words he has flung at you so often, when I



thought that you were trying to lead him on. If I could but have had one word, to have lived on it for a few moments, even to have known directly after that it was false and flattering! Linny—Linny, darling, you must forgive me, because I have hated you for all this, and without reason. I have been

madly jealous, and I believe that I am mad now. Oh! hold me—hold me, and help me to tear out this cruel love that is breaking my heart—killing me; for even you cannot tell what it is to live without hope."

"Oh, Janet!" sobbed Linny, reproachfully.



"I know—I know," cried Janet, passionately; "you love him, and he is another's. But you are handsome; your face is fair, and bright, and sweet; and you will soon forget all this, and love again. But look at me—at this face—at this shape! Oh, why did I not die when I was little! Why did he save me to become such a burden even to myself! They say that the crippled and deformed are vain, and blind to all their failings; but do you think that I am? Oh, no! I could loathe and trample upon myself for being what I am; while he is so brave, and straight, and handsome."

She clung, sobbing passionately the while, to Linny's breast—clinging to her with a frightened, wild aspect, as if she almost feared herself; till by slow degrees the laboured sobs became less painful, and the flowers which she still clutched in her poor, thin fingers withered away upon their bruised stalks.

The corn waved and rustled above their heads; the gaudy poppies nodded and fluttered their limp petals around; and here and there some corn-flower's bright purple peeped out from amidst the tangle of pinky bearbind and azure vetch. Now a lark would sing loud and high above their heads, or some finch or warbler, emboldened by the silence, perch upon the hedge hard by, to jerk out a few notes of its song, and then flit to some other spray.

Peace seemed to be diffused around, and began by degrees to pervade those two aching breasts.

"We must go," said Janet, at last, as she dried her eyes. "I am going back to London, to love my old favourites—the fish."

Then, looking up in a quiet and compassionate way at Linny, as if she alone were in trouble—

"Come, darling," she said, "let's try and forget

all this; but kiss me first, and say that you are not angry—not ashamed of me for what I have said. What makes you so silent? Why do you not answer?"

"I was thinking—thinking," said Linny, wearily; as she put her arms round Janet's neck and kissed her. "I was thinking that if I could have been like you I should have been happier; for I should have been wiser, and known better."

"Hush!" said Janet, softly. "I am wise—am I not?"

Then taking Linny's hand, as they rose, in an absent, weary way, they strolled back towards the little inn, where Monsieur Canau was awaiting their coming.

The sun still shone brightly, and there was the rich mellowness of the early autumn in the atmosphere, tinting all around with its soft, golden haze; but it seemed to the two girls that the smoke and ashes of London had fallen upon the scene, and they longed in secret for the time of departure to arrive.

Once, though, as they sat in the pleasant little inn room, Janet saw her companion start from her abstracted mood, for voices were heard approaching, and it was evident that the party from the lawn was about to pass the inn where the evening meal was spread.

Janet pressed the agitated girl's hand beneath the table, as she saw the folds of the little white muslin dress rise and fall; but Janet's act was unseen by the others, and soon afterwards D. Wragg went away to see about the horse, while Canau lit his cigarette, and strolled outside, leaving the girls alone.



They sat together going back, talking softly; and that night, in Brownjohn-street, Janet made her way to Linny's chamber, sitting long with her upon a box by the open window.

Hardly a word was spoken, but heart seemed whispering to heart of the secrets that had been

hidden there until that day, when, as if with one impulse, they had leaped forth into the light.

"I must go!" exclaimed Janet, at last. "But what were you thinking about?" she said, as, with her cheeks resting in her hands, Linny gazed up to where, clear and bright, the stars looked down upon them both.

"I was trying to read there how it will all end—what is to be my fortune," said Linny, as she turned with a sad smile to the speaker, twining one arm round the frail waist, and kissing Janet's sorrowful cheek. "And you—can you read your fortune there?"

"No need—no need," said Janet, bitterly; "I know it already. But there must be no more of this, Linny," she added, fiercely. "He has been tempted into coming here that he might see you and buy things with his foolish money; but he must be kept away. I am not so mad that I do not know what is right and just; and he shall speak no more to my darling. For, in my strange, wild way, Linny, I love you, not as if you were a sister, but with something of the love a mother must bear towards her little one; and all this must be stopped. He shall come here no more—I will speak. Hark! what's that?"

As she spoke, there came from below the sounds of voices in altercation, followed by the noise of a struggle.

Then, as she stood trembling and clinging to her companion, there were the panting, hard-breathing, and half-stifled ejaculations of those who seemed to be engaged; then, directly afterwards, utter silence.

CHAPTER XXI.—JANET WILL KEEP WATCH.

THE noise ceased the next moment; and, as the girls clung tremblingly together, they were ready to attribute the sounds to some outdoor disturbance, for in their street fight and quarrel were of no great rarity.

"It was nothing," said Linny; "but speak, tell me, what are you going to do?"

"Do!" said Janet, firmly. "Why, speak——"

"No, no; no, no. You must not say a word. I am not what I was yesterday. I seem to have grown older in a day—almost old." She sighed as she spoke, and, smiling sadly, she whispered as she kissed Janet, tenderly, "You need not fear for me. I shall be strong and firm for the future. Good night, now; and let us sleep all our troubles away."

Janet slowly left the room, and closed the door after her—pausing on the stairs, though, for fresh sounds came from below; and she listened attentively, to find that there were loud voices by the street door, apparently in angry altercation—one of which she recognised as that of D. Wragg, the other being that of the heavy young man who had of late taken so much interest in the contents of the dealer's shop.

"Now, look here, Jack Screwby!" Janet heard D. Wragg exclaim—"don't you make no mistake; trade's trade; but I aint cut my wisdom teeth for nothing. So, look here. If you come to my shop again, and speak to her like you did, and hang about here like you've hung, and talk about it like

you've talked, I'll—— Well, there, just you look out, and you'll see."

"Wot's he allers a hangin' about for, then?" growled the other voice. "You wouldn't say as much to him—no, I aint! I aint drunk, so now then. P'raps I'm as good as he is, and got a bit o' money together to go into the fancy when I like, if you aint the man to say, 'Take her, and come and be pardners.' I've done you a good many turns, D. Wragg; and now, when I wants to be good friends, you're all wrong with a chap as is p'raps ekuls with them as does in dogs."

"You *air* drunk, that's what you air!" exclaimed D. Wragg, in indignant tones—"or else you'd never come talking like that. Pardner, indeed!" he continued, contemptuously. "There, get out!"

Then, once more, there came the sounds of a scuffle, evidently caused by D. Wragg assisting his order with his hands; Mr. Screwby evidently offering all the resistance he could the while.

But, before many moments had elapsed, it was evident that the owner of the house had gained the victory, for the scuffle was followed by two or three oaths, a clattering of heavy boots, and then the banging of the side door; after which Janet stood ready to retreat, as she heard the "stump—stump" of D. Wragg's lame foot coming along the passage.

"Pardner, indeed!" muttered D. Wragg, in audible tones—"pardner, indeed!—and matrimonial advances! He! he! he! he! he!" he sniggered; and then he seemed to stand holding by the bottom of the balustrade, to indulge in a few minutes' sardonic mirth. "He's as drunk as an owl—a vagabond! Dursn't tell tales, though, if I did kick him. Let him tell, though, if he likes. Who's afraid?"

Judging from the tones of his voice, though, an unbiassed listener would have been disposed to say that Mr. D. Wragg was also in a state of inebriation; while, as to the fact of being afraid, if he were not in a state of fear, why did he speak so loudly?

The fact was that, after setting down his friends in Brownjohn-street, D. Wragg had driven off with the rickety four-wheeler, whose problem still remained unsolved: to wit—how it had possibly contrived to hold together for another day. But, hold together it had, even till the return to the owner's; and the dealer had gone back to the Dials, to finish the day with what he called a "top-off" at one of the flaming gin palace bars, where he had encountered Mr. John Screwby, who had roused his ire by references made, all of which Mr. D. Wragg had classed under the title of "cheek."

"Shall I stop him, and speak to him?" thought Janet, as she listened to the heavy step. Then, after a few moments' hesitation—"No," she said; "but I will keep watch."

That Janet intended to keep her word was evident from the fact that she hurried away from the staircase now to one of the front windows, which was half open in consequence of the heat; and, looking out cautiously to make sure who was the adversary with whom D. Wragg had been engaged, there, as she had expected, was Mr. John Screwby, in one of his favourite attitudes—that of leaning with his back up against a lamp-post, staring heavily at the house, and, drunk or sober, full of exuberant action, which

manifested itself in nods and shakings of the head and fist. His anger could be heard, too, in low and ominous growls, similar to those emitted by caged wild beasts, when their keeper forces them to display their noble proportions by stirring them up with a long pole.

At last, though, Janet had the satisfaction of seeing the brute slouch away, but not without turning once to shake his fist at the door, as he said a few words which did not reach the girl's ear; and then he was gone.

The words were loudly enough spoken, but they were drowned by the rattling wheels of a passing cab. The utterance, though, seemed to give Mr. John Screwby the greatest satisfaction, promising to his animal heart the gratification of revenge, for the words were—

"I'll have it out o' some of yer for this."

CHAPTER XXII.—THE SEARCH BEGINS.

WE left Robert Garth hurrying towards the Seven Dials, when one day—after the lapse of a couple of months from the events recorded in the last chapter—he had been suddenly summoned to town by Sir Richard Ambley.

Garth's brain was very busy, for he was able to evoke from his imagination much of that which had in reality occurred. He did not give Lionel the credit of being worse than most young men of his age; but he could easily surmise that the young man would be sure to repeat his visits to Brownjohn-street, even as he had threatened.

Then, had he not had the proofs from the landlord that such had been the case—proofs telling of constant purchases of articles that must have been obtained at D. Wragg's shop?

And what was the character of the people there? It was painful—it troubled him sorely at heart—but it was plain enough that the Brownjohn-street shop had been to Lionel Ambley a trap with an attractive bait; and that the prophecy, uttered merely as a warning, had come true—he had gone there once too often!

Then, as Garth hurried along, he told himself that his ideas were romantic and childish; that this was the nineteenth century, and that nowadays people were not inveigled and entrapped; that robbery was certainly common, and often accompanied with violence; but that murder was rare, and, when committed, for greater gain than could be obtained from a young man going to keep an assignation.

Garth winced as that word occurred to him; and he strode on swiftly, as if moved by his agitation. Then, once more, he slackened speed a little, and tried to cast aside his fears for Lionel's safety, telling himself once more that his imagination was clothing the affair with a romance it did not merit, and that in a few hours everything would turn out, though perhaps sad and painful to father and friend, yet, after all, of the most prosaic character; while one to whom he had been mentally rendering the homage due to a lady, would only prove to be light, ignorant, and anything but the creature he had so long dwelt upon in fancy.

Brownjohn-street was as of old when he last visited that region: idleness was rife; and as if waiting for

work to fall into their hands—or, more likely, not waiting for it at all—there were stout, sturdy, soft-handed young fellows loitering about by the score—talking, chewing straws, or engaged in some kind of halfpence gambling in secluded portions of the pavement.

But one and all had a sidelong glance for the well-dressed stranger passing along; and many a nod or wink was given as heads were turned, more than one of which attracted the notice of Garth, as he shudderingly wondered what would be the consequences if he were to come here frequently to visit at some one particular house—loiling insolently and carelessly along, with a contemptuous glance for reply to every scowl.

Garth shuddered again as he wondered, and then, angrily turning himself, he strode forward to the shop of D. Wragg.

Without a pause, he walked straight in, to find all as when he had seen it last: birds, animals—all were there; but there was no dove-scene, and, in place of the soft, pleasant lineaments of Linny, he encountered the swarthy face of Janet, who was seated behind the counter—her long, lithe fingers rapidly producing some kind of knitted work, which went on, although her eyes were firmly fixed upon the new comer.

Janet gazed almost angrily at him from beneath her dark brow, and she set her teeth firmly, as she unflinchingly met the young man's gaze.

A dull, heavy feeling of misery seemed to press upon Garth's heart, as his fears—the lesser fears that had troubled him—seemed to meet with confirmation. The next moment, sternly and angrily, he approached Janet, holding her, as it were, with his eye; and leaning over the counter, behind which she was seated, he said—

"I want his address."

Janet did not speak, but gazed at him, as if wonderingly, for a few moments; and then, in a puzzled way, repeated Garth's last words—

"You want his address—you want his address?"

"Yes," said Garth, hastily, "I want his address."

And as he looked he could see that, in spite of the bold way in which his glance was met, Janet was trembling.

Garth waited for an answer; but the only words that came were—

"You want his address?"

"Yes, yes," said Garth, hastily. "Where is he—where has he gone? You need not be afraid."

"Afraid! Afraid of what?" said Janet, harshly.

"There, there—let us have none of this fencing," cried Garth, angrily. "Afraid to tell me. Where is he? Has he taken her abroad? Look here, you are a woman, and young, and should have a feeling heart."

Janet burst into a mocking laugh, but Garth went on without heeding it—

"He has a father, and the old man is in despair. He fears that mischief has befallen him. We know that he is young and foolish, and that he has been here often to see her."

"I do not understand you. What are you talking about?" said Janet, coldly; though it was evident that she was terribly moved.

Garth saw it, and, never for a moment relaxing his gaze, went on—

"If they have gone away together, at least let me know for certain that he is safe—that we may look to hear from him again; and I will not press you farther than for information that shall prove to me that what you say is the truth. I speak plainly, for this is a most painful case."

Garth paused, astonished at the change that had come over Janet; for, as the meaning of his words seemed to dawn upon her mind, she started back; one hand tore hastily, in spite of her efforts for mastery, at her throat, as if to keep down the choking sensation that would arise; and as she leaned towards him, drawn apparently by the power of his eyes, she gasped forth—

"Do you mean—do you mean—?" she cried, hoarsely, repeating her words, as her face assumed a livid aspect.

"Yes—yes; you know well enough what I mean—Mr. Ambley."

"Mr. Ambley?" she repeated, hoarsely.

"Yes—yes; he disappeared above a week since. Tell me where they have gone."

Still her gaze was wild and fixed, and no word fell from her lips, till, in his impatience, Garth raised one of the long, bony wrists; when, the touch galvanizing her into action, she snatched her wrist away, and then—as if fleeing from the memory of some great horror—she tottered into the back room; but not to escape, for she was angrily followed by Garth.

CHAPTER XXIII.—JANET'S MADNESS.

ROBERT GARTH stopped short upon entering D. Wragg's room, as if he had been smitten, for he suddenly found himself face to face with Linny, who stood before him, pale, trembling, and agitated, but meeting his gaze with a calm, simple look of innocence that should have at once disarmed suspicion.

"You here?" he exclaimed. "Thank God!" and then, for a few moments, he was silent. Recovering himself, though, the next moment, he caught one of her hands in his, as he struggled with the reaction in his breast—a mingling of pleasure, doubt, and undefined trouble.

"Mr. Ambley?" he said, at last, addressing Linny, regardless of the bent and desolate-looking figure crouching at her side. "He has been here much lately to see you."

"Mr. Ambley has been sometimes to the shop, sir," said Linny, coldly withdrawing her hand.

"But," exclaimed Garth, eagerly, "do you know where he now is? If you do, pray tell me."

"Indeed, I cannot tell you—I do not know," said Linny, quietly. "I heard all your questions, sir. He has not been here for nearly a fortnight."

"He was here eleven—twelve days since," said a voice.

Garth turned sharply, to see that a new actor had appeared upon the scene, in the shape of the little Frenchman, who raised his pinched old hat most courteously.

"Twelve days since!" repeated Garth; "and for what purpose?"

"*Ma foi!*" exclaimed Canau, with his shrug of the shoulders. "Perhaps monsieur will walk with me into the shop, and we will talk. Not here."

Puzzled, as well as anxious, Garth stepped into the shop, where, amidst the noise made by the restless birds and animals, the little Frenchman stood, as if ready to answer the visitor's queries.

But not at first: it was not until after preliminary fencing, by which the shrewd foreigner contrived to gain some little insight into Garth's object and character; though over the former there was but small difficulty, the young man esteeming it the better policy to be frank and open.

Canau saw this, and, in his turn, seemed to meet his visitor upon his own ground, speaking openly, and to the point.

"But he is young—a boy—and foolish; he does not understand my girls. I call them both mine, monsieur. He makes mistakes; but we forgive him. She," he said, nodding towards the inner room, "is young, too, and beautiful, and we love her. Perhaps that is why he came. But we forgive him, and he has not been lately."

Garth looked fixedly at the little Frenchman as he spoke. Were these the words of truth, or was there something hidden? Was this man frank, or was he an old deceiver, who could mask his face to suit any character when he was at war with society.

And yet there was such an air of candour in all that was spoken, and so much quiet dignity in the Frenchman's words, that it was with a feeling he could not have explained that Garth thanked him for what had been said.

"But you do not seem to realize the fact," exclaimed Garth. "He has disappeared so suddenly; and knowing him to have been a visitor here, we naturally look towards this place with suspicion."

"Yes—yes! but I see," said Canau, quietly; "but he is not here. We do not know. This is a bad place, but we are quiet people here; and if my girls knew anything, they would tell directly. I hope he has not been robbed. There are many about these streets by night whom it would not be safe for him to meet. But there—he is young; he has gone upon some voyage, some excursion. Be at ease: he will return, and the old man will be happy."

Canau's words were so calm, and carried with them such force, that, forgetting place and his companion's abject appearance, Garth seemed to recognize in him so much of the gentleman, that he raised his hat, the salute being courteously returned.

"If you can give me any information," said Garth, "pray do so; for we are ill at ease respecting him."

He added the Regent-street address to his card, and handed it to the Frenchman, who seemed to brighten up and to look elate as he spoke with Garth.

"My best endeavours shall be at the service of monsieur," he said; and then, in answer to a few more words, he gave an affirmative nod.

Then together they entered the little room, to find Linny bending over Janet, whose face was buried in her hands.

"I am afraid," said Garth, addressing Linny, "that I startled her by my vehemence. I see now that I have been labouring under a gross misappre-

hension, and can only ask your forgiveness. Pray make my excuses to her when she grows more calm. I am very anxious about my friend."

He stopped, hesitated for a few moments, and approaching and taking Linny's trembling hand, he said, huskily—

"You say that you heard all my words, and I cannot leave without saying more. I see that I was grievously in error. You must attribute it to weakness and ignorance; but I must ask you, before I go, to forgive the injustice—the wrong I have done you."

Linny did not speak; she tried, but no words came to her lips. She looked anxious and troubled, and there was a great feeling of sorrow at her heart—a sorrow which made her bosom heave, till, recalling the scene she had witnessed upon the Essex lawn, and the words which she had heard uttered, it seemed to her that he was but mocking; and, withdrawing her hand, she just bent her head in reply, leaving Garth to quit the room with the scene fixed upon his mind of Linny leaning down over the weeping girl at her side.

But could he have stayed, he would have seen Janet start up, wild and eager, to catch Canau by the hand, as she fixed upon him her eager eyes.

"What have they done with him?" she half shrieked. "You know—he knows! There is some foul play here, and mischief has befallen him for the sake of his wretched money. Oh, that I should stay here in this place where such things are done! But it shall not be. They shall be told where he is, and what has been done."

"But, my child, you are mad, and wild, and do not know what it is you say. We do not know where he is."

"What!" half shrieked Janet. "Do I not know that he has been led on and on here by D. Wragg, to get his money. Has it not been cruel, scandalous, and abominable to her? And it shall all be made plain."

"Hush, hush, little one!" said Canau; "you talk at random—you speak of what you do not know. Linny, take her—let her lie down and be at peace. We shall soon hear news of this unfortunate boy."

CHAPTER XXIV.—A BROKEN REED.

ROBERT GARTH walked hastily back towards Lionel Ambley's chambers, his mind confused with what he had seen and heard. He was half pained, half pleased. At one moment there was a feeling of elation in his breast that made it swell joyfully; the next, he would think of conflicting circumstances, and depression would ensue. Thoughts that he had believed to be crushed out were again there to trouble him; and so preoccupied was he that he did not see the peering, curious face of D. Wragg, as it passed within a yard of his own, watchful as a terrier's after a rat.

So conflicting were Robert Garth's thoughts, that for a while, though not driven out, the recollection of the mission upon which he had been bent was certainly dimmed. He had been so surprised: matters had turned out so differently to the way he had anticipated, and he was so pleased to find that he had been in the wrong, that for awhile he strode on,

pondering upon the pleasant vision he had left behind, till, rapidly approaching the chambers, the thoughts of the missing man came back with full force, and with them a feeling of sorrow and remorse for what he was ready now to call his forgetfulness.

Rousing himself, then, to a sense of duty, he hurried up the stairs, but not so quickly that he had not time to think that there was not the slightest necessity for the family at D. Wragg's to be put to further trouble or annoyance. If ill had befallen Lionel on his way to or from the Dials, they were not to blame; and, after all, it seemed that matters would turn out that Lionel had been in another direction.

But suppose, after all, he had been too ready to trust to appearances; that the dark, deformed girl was frightened, because she knew that he was in search of his friend; and the old Frenchman was, after all, only an oily-tongued deceiver; while Linny—

There was a warm flush in his face as he strode up the few remaining stairs to the room where Sir Richard Ambley was seated, ready to start up eagerly as the young man entered.

"Well," exclaimed the elder, "what news?"

"None, sir, at present," said Garth, gloomily. "I was leaning upon a reed, and I find that it was broken."

CHAPTER XXV.—UPON THORNS.

TWO days after, the following advertisement appeared in the second column of the *Times*:—

"TWO HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD.—Disappeared from his chambers, Regent-street, on the 6th instant, Lionel George Francis Ambley, aged 24; 5 ft. 11 inches high; muscular; fair, open countenance, with scar of a hunting fall over the left temple; aquiline nose, blue eyes, light moustache, and bright brown, closely curling hair. Supposed to have worn a black evening dress suit, with light grey Warwick overcoat. Whoever will give such information as shall lead to his discovery, either at Great Scotland-yard, or to Mr. Whittick, Private Inquiry Offices, Branksome-street, shall receive the above reward."

"That will bring us some news, Garth, I hope," said Sir Richard. "If it does not, at the end of a week I shall increase it to five hundred, and at the end of another week I shall double the amount. Money must find him, if he is to be found. But we will find him," he exclaimed, fiercely, "dead or alive—alive or dead," he repeated, with quivering lips. "With all his light carelessness, he never let a whole week pass without writing to me; and something fearful must have happened, I feel sure."

"Be hopeful, sir, pray," said Garth, as he watched—with troubled mien—the worn and haggard countenance of the stately old gentleman.

"I will—I will, Garth, as long as I can; but this is hard work; and if he is dead, it will break my heart. You ought never to have left him," he added, reproachfully.

"I would not have done so," said Garth, "had I possessed the slightest influence; but really, during the latter part of my stay, I found that he would not submit to the least restraint."

"Yes—yes, I know how obstinate the poor boy was," said the old man, in tremulous tones.

"Is, sir—is," exclaimed Garth, laying his hand upon Sir Richard's arm.

"Yes, is; we will not yet despair," said Sir Richard. "But you had influence—the influence of your quiet, firm example. But did I tell you that I had had reward bills posted about the streets?" he added, hastily, on seeing Garth's pained and troubled aspect.

"You did not, sir; but it was wisely done. And now it seems to me necessary that one of us should be always here, in case of information of any kind arriving."

"I will stay," said Sir Richard; "it is my duty, though the inaction is extremely hard to bear. But I am weak and troubled, and unable to keep up. I never knew before how old I had grown. You must carry on the search; but you will come back often, Garth?"

"I will, sir," said Garth, gently.

And soon after, in search of news, he left the house.

His first mission was to Great Scotland-yard, where he was passed upstairs to a quiet, ordinary-looking person in plain clothes, who, however, only shook his head.

"Nothing at present, sir," he said; "but, do you know, I think Sir Richard Ambley is making a mistake, sir. Too many cooks spoil the broth. Better have left it to us. We're doing all we can. Private inquiries are all very well, and Whittick's a good man—was here, you know; but I think Sir Richard's wrong, sir; I do, indeed."

"You must excuse it all on account of an anxious father's fears," said Garth, quietly, as, after being told for the twentieth time that information should be forwarded the moment it arrived, he took his leave, so as to seek the renowned Mr. Whittick, of private inquiry fame.

CHAPTER XXVI.—AT FAULT.

ROBERT GARTH was fortunate, for he was shown into the great Mr. Whittick's presence directly; and, as soon as seated, he had the pleasure of feeling that the private inquirer was mentally photographing him, though all the time his words were quiet and urbane; but it seemed as if Mr. Whittick made use of all his faculties at once. He talked to his visitor, he listened to him, he gazed at him tremendously at times: he seemed to be smelling him, and, from the motion of his fingers, he evidently had a strong inclination to feel his visitor, for purposes of future recognition.

"No, sir—at present none; but we are doing all that is possible."

"But have you nothing definite to communicate?" said Garth, despondently.

"No, sir; at present, nothing," said Mr. Whittick; "but—if I might be so bold—there was an advertisement in the *Times* this morning, placed there, of course, by Sir Richard Ambley. I was not consulted over the matter. I think you know, sir, that Sir Richard is wrong. I see that he has the Scotland-yard people at work. Not a good plan, sir. They are very able men there—Johnson's

good; but 'too many cooks,' you know, 'spoil the broth.' Humble aphorism; but true, sir. However, Sir Richard may depend upon my doing my best."

Robert Garth rose with a sigh, and left the office, feeling very little hope of success in this direction. Jealousy was evidently at work, and he could not but own to himself that Sir Richard had made a wrong step.

What should he do next? he asked himself. He had not been to Brownjohn-street the last day or two. Why should he not go there again? He might obtain some news.

It was hardly worth while going, he told himself; only he thought it possible that he might see the bird-dealer himself, and perhaps obtain some little information likely to prove of use. But D. Wragg was not in when he reached Brownjohn-street; and in place of seeing Linny, or poor Janet, Garth encountered the round, pleasant, playbill-rayed face of Mrs. Winks, rising like a fleshly sun from behind the paint-cloudy counter to the loud song of the larks—for Mrs. Winks had just been stooping to hide the weakness which she kept for her own private use in a ginger-beer bottle. Mrs. Winks's head was only to be seen without curl papers when she attended the theatres by night, in the full dress of curls and blue merino, ready to supply the mental and bodily wants of the frequenters of Drury Lane Theatre gallery. Upon this occasion, the playbill used had been one of the newest, the result being that a good deal of the ink had been transferred from the larger letters to Mrs. Winks's forehead, giving it a somewhat smudgy look.

The good lady, though, was quite in ignorance of her personal aspect; and after laying aside her weakness, carefully corked, she was bringing out of a capacious pocket a saveloy, wrapped in a playbill—the delicacy being intended for her lunch—when the appearance of Robert Garth arrested her, and, escaping from the paper, the saveloy slipped back to the depths of her pocket, to be kept warm until required.

Mrs. Winks rose to meet the visitor with a smile, which gave place to a puzzled look, upon his inquiring for D. Wragg, and then for Linny.

"I'll go and tell her, sir," said the old lady.

And she hurried upstairs to where Linny was with Janet; but only to return, nodding her head most sagely, as she told herself that she knew what it all meant.

"She've got a bad 'edache, sir, and aint well," said Mrs. Winks; "but if you'd leave any message?"

"No," said Garth, thoughtfully. "You might, though, tell that French gentleman that I called."

"Which he really is a thorough gentleman," said Mrs. Winks, enthusiastically, "as you'd say if you know'd him, and heard him paint and play on the fiddle: I mean—I beg your pardon, sir—seen him play on the fiddle and paint. He's a gentleman, every inch of him, if he do lodge on a second floor; which aint nothing after all, is it, sir? But I'll tell him when he do come back, and your name too."

Garth gave her a card, and then walked thoughtfully back; but not without stopping at a blank wall where a knot of rough-looking fellows were

reading a placard, commencing, "Two Hundred Pounds Reward." And then he shuddered, as one of the party said—

"I s'pose they'd hand over all the same if he happened to be a dead un!"

CHAPTER XXVII.—INFORMATION.

THERE was no news at Regent-street when Garth returned; and, though Sir Richard had but just concluded an interview with a police-sergeant, the mystery seemed as far as ever from solution.

"I think I'll go out now, Garth," said Sir Richard, in an excited and feverish manner; "it is so hard to stay in, walking up and down as if caged, and waiting eagerly for every knock and ring. You'll take my place—you won't leave—you won't leave, in case of a call while you are away?"

"You may trust me, Sir Richard."

"Yes, yes—I know, I know," said the old gentleman, wringing his hands—"I feel it! But, Garth," he said, anxiously, "if any people should come with information in answer to advertisements, keep them till I come back."

"I will, decidedly," said Garth; "but may I ask where you are going now?"

"Only to see if the bills are well posted; and, you know, I might see some one who had news for me. It is possible."

"I did see one bill posted up," said Garth; but he did not mention the remark he had heard made.

"That's well, Garth—that's well; and I pray to goodness that this state of anxiety may soon be at an end."

Garth walked with Sir Richard to the door, and felt shocked to see the way in which he had altered during the past few days. Then, returning to his seat, he began to think over the strange disappearance—recalling, too, that evening when he had determined to part from Lionel; their visit to the dog-fancier's, and the strange feelings that had been aroused; and now, troubled at heart, and reluctant, he was pondering upon whether it was not his duty to place in the hands of the police the knowledge he possessed of Lionel's many visits to the Dials. He could not quite reconcile himself to the task, for he knew that it must result in much unpleasantry to Linny; but it struck him suddenly that the behaviour of the deformed girl was strange, though it had not appeared so at the time. Could she know anything? Had the foolish young man been inveigled to some den, robbed, and murdered? And did the horrified aspect Janet had worn mean that she was in possession of the secret? He shuddered as such thoughts arose, and again and again asked himself what he should do; ending by coming to the determination that he would wait at least until the following day, and then go to the house and warn them of what was about to be done. And yet, if anything were wrong, it was like putting them upon their guard. But their treatment of him seemed to demand that courtesy; and, whatever was wrong, he felt that it would be hard for the innocent to be amongst the sufferers. He could not put them to unnecessary pain.

Then came again a cloud of doubt and suspicion,

which hung over him till a couple of hours after, when Sir Richard Ambley returned—pale, anxious, and tired—to look inquiringly at Garth, and receive for answer a shake of the head; the young man feeling the while that he was not acting openly with his elder in keeping from him all he knew—information that it was a constant struggle with self whether he should impart or no.

In the evening, as they were seated together—Garth thoughtful and silent, and Sir Richard with his face turned from the light—the latter spoke.

"I cannot suffer this inaction much longer," he said. "It is always the same answer from the police:—'Leave it in our hands, sir; we are hard at work; though, so far, we have nothing to show.' They say that every—every deadhouse has been searched; the men at the waterside told to be on the look-out; hospitals have been visited; everything possible done; but who can be satisfied? We must begin on fresh ground to-morrow, Garth. What's that? Did some one knock?"

Mr. Still entered, to announce that there was a man below waiting to see some one respecting the reward.

Sir Richard started instantly to his feet.

"Show him up at once, Still!" he exclaimed.

And then, not content to wait, in his anxiety he followed the landlord downstairs, returning in a few minutes with the heavy-faced young fellow, before introduced as Mr. John Screwby.

"Now, my man, sit down; don't stand there!" exclaimed Sir Richard, thrusting a chair forward. "Now, tell us quickly."

"Don't keer to sit down, thankey," said the fellow, surlily, taking a sidelong glance round the room, ending by fixing his eyes for a moment on the door, as if to make sure that there was a retreat open in case of need.

"Well, well," exclaimed Sir Richard; "now, tell us what you know, and why you have come. Did you see the advertisement, or one of those placards?"

"Blaguards?" said the fellow, inquiringly.

"Yes, yes—the bills."

"Yes; I saw a bill—two 'undred pound reward—and I've come for that there two 'undred pound reward."

"But your information—what do you know?" broke in Garth.

The man turned, and stared at him heavily.

"Ah, I didn't know you at fust, without no hat on; but I knows you now. You was with him once when he came down our way. I seed you then, and I aint forgot you. But, fust of all, who's going to pay this here money? Is it you, or is it him?"

"I'll pay you—I'll pay you, my man," exclaimed Sir Richard; "and what is your information—what do you know?"

"What I know's worth two 'undred pound now," said the fellow, winking at Garth; "but if I tells it, then, p'r'aps, it won't be worth nothin' to me."

"You are dealing with a gentleman, my good fellow," said Garth, "and you need be under no apprehension."

"But how do I know as I sha'n't be done?" was the offensive reply. "Nobody don't trust me nothin'; and I don't see why I should trust nobody. I'm a

plain-spoke sort of a chap, I am; and I allers says what's in my mind. So now, lookye here: you says you'll give two 'undred pound to them as 'll tell you wheer a tall young man's gone: that's it, aint it?"

Garth nodded.

"Werry good, then. I comes here, and I says, 'Hand over the stiff.' 'What for?' says you. 'Cos I knows wheer he is,' says I. 'So, now then,' I says, 'hand over the tin.'"

Without another word, Sir Richard went to a small writing-case, opened it, and took from a book a ready-signed cheque for the amount.

"Stop!" exclaimed Garth. "Excuse me, Sir Richard; but your anxiety overleaps your caution. How do we know that this man's information is worth having?"

"He says he knows where—where— You know what he says," said Sir Richard, piteously.

"Yes," said Garth; "but let him prove his words."

"What, are yer a-goin' to run back from it, or are yer a-goin' to hand over the stiff?" said the man, uneasily.

"When you have earned it," said Garth, almost fiercely. "Now, look here, my man, show us the value of your information, and restore this gentleman to his friends; and, without any reference to such complicity as you may have had in the transaction, the two hundred pounds are yours."

"But, lookye here," said the man, leaning towards him. "S'pose as he's— You know what?" and he whispered the last words.

"The money is yours all the same," said Garth, in the same tone.

But the man was, apparently, still far from satisfied—muttering, biting pieces out of his cap-lining, and spitting them upon the carpet, till a bright thought seemed to strike him, to which he gave birth—

"Lookye here, gents. Let's have the money posted fair for both sides. I knows a gen'lman down our way as keeps a beer-shop, as 'd see fair and make all square. Now, what do you say?"

What would have been said was arrested by a sudden start—or, rather, jump—on the part of Mr. John Screwby, who, following the direction of Sir Richard's eyes, found that another person had softly entered the room, and taken a place at his elbow, where he had stood for some few minutes listening to the conversation.

CHAPTER XXVIII.—SCREWBYS "TIP."

MR. JOHN SCREWBYS face was a worthy study for a painter, or, could some instantaneous photographer have secured his aspect, a *carte* could have been produced that would have made the fortune of any speculator in heads of eminent men. For, as he started away, his jaw half-dropped, his eyes staring, and fists clenched, he seemed, for the moment, turned into stone—a statue gazing at the quiet, unmoved intruder upon the scene.

"How do, Jack?" said the new comer, quietly, as he took a slight glance from the corners of his eyes at the informer.

"You're werry civil all 'twunst," said the fellow,

recovering himself a little; "but you aint got nothin' agen me."

"Not I, Jack—at least, not yet," said the new comer, smiling. "But what brings you here? Smelt the reward?"

The man stared, sniffed, rubbed his nose viciously upon his sleeve, and shuffled uneasily from foot to foot; but he did not answer.

"He professes to hold the required information," said Sir Richard; "and he is afraid that we should not duly perform our part of the contract. He is suspicious, lest we should withhold part of the money—my friend here thinking that we ought first to prove the value of his tidings."

"Of course," said the new comer, with a commendatory nod of the head at Garth. "He knows what business is, evidently; not, though, that our friend Jack Screwby here would do any thing but what was of the most honourable description. He's a gent who would scorn a mean action; and as to taking advantage of anybody—there, bless your heart, you might trust him with a baby unborn."

"None o' your gammon now, can't yer?" growled Jack.

"Gammon? Nonsense, Jack; it's all straight-forward and aboveboard. You shall be all right. Now, look here, what do you know? If it's worth the two hundred pounds you shall have the money, clean down in your fist. I'll see that you do. Now, are you satisfied?"

"Fain sweatings," growled Mr. Screwby, who was apparently far from being in as confident a state as he could have wished.

"What does he say?" exclaimed Sir Richard.

"He means, sir, that he don't want the reward money to be fiddled."

"Fiddled?" said Sir Richard.

"Yes, sir; thinned down and deducted from."

"Oh, no; let him earn the reward, and he shall have it in full," exclaimed Sir Richard.

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CHAPTER XXIX.—SERGEANT PROUT.



NEW-comer exclaimed—

"To be sure! There, Jack, do you hear? All fair and above-board; money down as soon as the gentleman is found—*by your information, mind!*"

"Well, never mind about no informations," growled Screwby. "If I find him, eh?"

"Yes; if you find the gentleman."

"Dead or alive?" said Screwby, brutally.

"Dead or alive," said the new comer, turning, as did also Garth, to glance at Sir Richard Ambley, who was very pale, but who remained unmoved, save for the corners of his mouth, which twitched sharply.

Mr. John Screwby evidently seemed to have great faith in his own powers as a reader of physiognomy, for he glanced from one to the other, and allowed his eyes to rest long upon each face. Then he had a long stare at the door, and another at the window, as if meditating flight, or probably from his foxy, wild beast-like nature, which prompted him to mistrust everybody, and to have both an avenue of entrance and another for escape. Then he took another vicious rub at his nose, and refreshed himself with a nibble at his cap, off which he evidently obtained a few woolly scraps. But at last he allowed his furtive-looking eyes to rest upon the new comer, who had been all the time thoughtfully tapping his teeth with his pencil, and, apparently, taking not the slightest notice of him whatever.

The fellow then prepared to speak, by hitching himself closer to the new comer, who only gave a nod, which was interpreted to mean—"Stay where you are."

For Mr. John Screwby stood shuffling from foot to foot, and then placed his hand before his mouth, to direct the flow of his discourse only into the stranger's ear.

"Speak out, Jack," said the latter, coolly; "you needn't be afraid."

"Who is afeard?" growled Jack, sourly.

"Oh, not you, Jack, of course," said the other. "You've a heart above that sort of thing, you know."

"You're gallus witty, you are," growled Jack, below his breath.

"Well, speak up, Jack; the gentlemen would like to hear what you have to say, I'm sure."

"Looky here, then, Master Prout," said Jack, in a hoarse whisper, that sounded as harsh and grating

as the sharpening of a saw—"looky here—that there young chap's been a-hanging about D. Wragg's crib for months past."

"To be sure he has, Jack—to be sure. We know that; and what does it mean? Pigeons, or rats, or dogs, or something of that sort, eh?"

Isaac Prout, sergeant of police, from Great Scotland-yard, half-closed his eyes as he spoke, and thrust his hands beneath his coat-tails, as, with head on one side, he waited to hear further news.

"Pigeons—dogs. Not a bit of it; he wasn't arter them," said Screwby. "Gents like him don't have no 'casion to come down our way, 'cause why? Lots o' dealers comes arter them, and 'll bring 'em any number o' rats or dogs either, for the matter o' that. You knows better nor that, Master Prout. If I was to tell you as I came down to make these here gents' minds easy, you wouldn't believe me, would you?"

"Well, not to put too fine a point on it, Jack Screwby," said the sergeant, "no—I should not."

"No," said the fellow, chuckling, "in course you wouldn't; and no more you don't believe as he went down our way arter rats or dogs."

"Well, suppose he did not, what then?" said the sergeant.

"Don't you 'urry no man's cattle. You may have a moke o' your own some day," said Screwby, with a grin. "I'm a-comin' to it fast, I am; so look out. Lookye here, guv'nor," he said, in his hoarse whisper, and he craned his neck towards the impassive officer, "lars Chewsdays night was a week as I see him go in theer all alone."

"Go in where, Jack—in where?" said the sergeant, quietly, but with his eyes a little closer, his ears twitching, and every nerve evidently on the strain.

"Why, aint I a-tellin' on yer? In theer."

"To be sure—yes, of course," said the sergeant, quietly; "in there—all right."

"Yes," continued Screwby, "in there—in at D. Wragg's; and," continued the fellow in deep tones, harsh, husky, and like a hoarse whisper sent through some large tube—"and he didn't come out no more."

CHAPTER XXX.—ON THE TRACK.

AS the rough, brutal fellow uttered those words, accompanying them with a low cunning grin of satisfaction at his success, the walls of the room seemed to swim round before Robert Garth's eyes; but, recovering himself, he ran to Sir Richard's side, just as he was staggering, and would have fallen.

"It's nothing, my dear boy, nothing at all," he gasped; "only a slight touch of faintness. Ring—a glass of wine—a little water—thanks. I'm a little overdone with anxiety—a trifle unnerved. Sergeant, you will see to this directly. We will go with you."

"Better not, sir—better not," said the sergeant, bluntly; "leave it in my hands."

"Sergeant Prout," said the old man, piteously, "you are not a father, or you would not speak like that."

"Aint I, by Jove, sir!" cried the sergeant, heartily.

"I've got ten already, and goodness knows how many more to come. I've had butcher and baker on the brain any time these ten years, sir, let alone boots. But I beg your pardon, Sir Richard—I won't say another word. Here, you Screwby, go and sit

in that chair," and he pointed to the one farthest from the door.

Then, walking across with the man, he to a certain extent seemed to seat him in the chair, the great hulking rascal being like so much plastic clay in his hands.

The next moment Sergeant Prout was at the low window, which he threw open, and stepped out upon the balcony; but an instant after he was back—very hastily back—in the room, to hurry towards the door, which he opened, to take the key from the outside and carefully lock it from within—the key being afterwards placed in his pocket.

A few seconds more, and, to the surprise of Sir Richard and Garth, he was once more in the balcony, where he uttered a low cough.

There was a few moments' pause, when he stooped over, and leaning down, spoke to some one beneath.

Apparently satisfied, he re-entered the room, closed the window, unlocked the door, and began to walk up and down thoughtfully, tapping his teeth the while with the end of his pencil.

"For what are we waiting, sergeant?" said Sir Richard, anxiously.

"Cab, sir," said the officer, curtly; "and here it is. After you, gentlemen."

As he spoke, there was the sound of wheels grating against the kerb below, and a few minutes after, the party was being rattled through the streets, but only to stop before long at a quiet-looking office.

Springing out, the sergeant signed to a policeman, who seemed to be there by accident, but, all the same, ready to take his place by the cab door, adding nothing to the ease and comfort of Mr. John Screwby, who was quite as fidgety, when, after a few minutes, the sergeant returned, gave a few instructions to the driver, and then they were once more rattling through the gaslit streets.

"Rather a tight fit, gentlemen," said the sergeant, "four in one of these cabs; but it won't be for long."

In effect, sooner than Garth anticipated, the cab stopped, and the sergeant again sprang out.

"Now, gentlemen," he said, "perhaps you'll have the goodness to follow at a little distance. It's two streets off yet, but in this extremely pleasant and salubrious region we don't want to make any fuss. My dear friend, Mr. John Screwby, and I will go on together, so as to show the way. You need not be afraid," he whispered to Garth; "keep tight hold of the old gentleman's arm, and bring him along quickly. There's plenty of help close at hand."

Garth nodded, and then, as he drew Sir Richard's arm through his own, he hastily glanced round, to see once more the thronging types of misery and vice that he had encountered on his previous visits; there were the same hulking ruffians, short of hair, sallow of face, and low of brow—own brothers in aspect of the gentleman who had turned informer. There, too, were the same slatternly women—old and young; children that never seemed to have been young; and at nearly every corner the gin-palace in full *levée*, its courtiers thronging in and out as the doors swung to and fro.

Garth read this at a glance, and then followed the sergeant through the crowded streets, attracting as little notice as was possible; but from time to time

the young man could see that some ruffianly head or another was turned to gaze after Screwby and his companion; intelligent nods and winks, too, were passed from one observer to another, and once Garth heard the whispered words, "What's up?"

No one seemed to care, though, to follow figures that were evidently well known; and so great was the attention bestowed upon them that little, so far as he could see, fell to the share of Sir Richard and himself.

They soon reached the shop of Mr. D. Wragg, the shutters of which natural history emporium were up, but both side and shop doors were quite open, only, though, to close, as it were, by invisible agency, till Garth turned to find that, starting, as it were, from that invisible region they are known so much to affect when wanted, a couple of policemen were at his elbow, whose duty it had doubtless been to close the portals against the curious crowd certain to collect as soon as it was bruited abroad that there was "a case on" at the house of "Mr. D. Wragg, naturalist."

CHAPTER XXXI.—NOT HIS CASTLE.

"HULLO, I say! What's all this here about?" cried a familiar voice, and D. Wragg began to jerk himself fiercely into the shop. "Don't you make no mistake. What? Hulloo! Eh? I say!" he exclaimed, with a grin of delight taking the place of his surprise; "what, my lovely Jack Screwby, nabbed at last?"

"No, I aint nabbed at last neither, Muster D. Wragg," sneered the gentleman addressed; "and as they says to me wunst—well, more'n wunst, if you like," he growled, as he caught the sergeant's eye fixed upon him—"as they says to me, says they, 'Don't you be so jolly free with your tongue, 'cos what you say now may be used in evidence agen you.'"

D. Wragg's features twitched furiously, as he turned up the gas, and then, for the first time, he caught sight of Garth, and started violently, to the great delight of Screwby, who stood grinning and rubbing his hands, thoroughly enjoying the discomfiture of his enemy.

"Now, don't you make no mistake, sir," exclaimed D. Wragg. "The dorg aint here this time, and I aint seen it, as I'll take my Bible oath on it. There aint neither a bird, nor a hanimal, nor nothink o' no kind as aint mine, and paid for down on the nail; so don't you make no mistake now, come. You can do as you like, you know, only mind this here: there's law for me as well as law for you. You can think as I've got the dorg, if you like; only 'spectable houses o' business aint to be entered at all times without things being made square."

"There, why don't you take advice when it's given you, old chap?" said the sergeant. "You know what we've come about, though, I dessay."

"Know what you've come about?" said D. Wragg—"why, of course I do. You've come about that there gent's friend's dorg, same as they've been to gether about it before, and I helped 'em into getting of it; but you're in the wrong box this time, so I tell you. But what do you expect you're going to do?"

"What's the good of being a fool, Wragg? The

game's up, so you may just as well give up quietly, and not go into a pack of stuff about dogs."

But D. Wragg protested again and again that he knew that they must be come about some dog or another, till, assuming an injured air, he took out his pipe and lit it, and then stood with folded arms, jerking himself about, and muttering, while without further ceremony the police, accompanied in every movement by Sir Richard and Garth, thoroughly searched the house, beginning with the underground kitchens, and then proceeding upwards; but not until due precautions had been taken to prevent the escape of the inmates.

"This is all very well, sir, you know," said the sergeant; "but of course we don't expect to find anything more than a clue of some kind, though I've my doubts even about that. Old Wragg was not made so much like a foxy terrier for nothing. Whatever has been done, I don't give the old chap credit for having bungled it; but, all the same, it seemed the thing to come—not quite regular, you know," he added, confidentially, "but we'll risk that."

Room after room was searched, until the second floor was reached; and here, by their voices, Garth knew Janet and Linny to be.

He did not wish them to be exposed to annoyance, in spite of his strange thoughts; so, stepping forward, he entered first, to find them standing by the window, in company with Mrs. Winks, who had hastened upstairs to try and spare them needless alarm.

"I trust that you will not lay this intrusion to my charge," said Garth, approaching Linny. "You gave me your word that you knew nothing of my friend's disappearance, and I believed you."

"And then, to prove your faith, you brought the police here to search my friend's rooms," said Linny, bitterly, as she turned away.

"Do not be unjust," said Garth. "Information has been given to us that my poor friend was seen to enter this house upon the night of his disappearance, and was not seen to return."

"Oh, my good 'evins, what a horrid story!" exclaimed Mrs. Winks, "when I was at home all that very night, bad with the tic, same as I am to-night, and no gentleman come here then, as I'll take my oath on. And me abusin' the tic all the while, as was a blessin' in disguise; for it's glad enough I am to be at home this night, my dears. He never came anigh here that Chewsdays night, though."

"Yes, he did now; so don't you make no mistake. Come about a new dog-collar, he did, and took it away with him, while you was upstairs, Mother Winks."

D. Wragg had spoken these words, to the extreme delight of Screwby, who grinned and rubbed his hands down his sides upon hearing this voluntary corroboration of his evidence.

But the sergeant merely shook his head, arguing that the lame gentleman who had jerked his body upstairs was far too old a stager to commit himself by such an open statement, unless he had good reason for so doing.

Meanwhile, the master of the house looked on, while the police peered into all sorts of impossible

places; passing over things that might possibly have served as a clue, to stop to examine scraps of paper, or pieces of furniture, that could not relate to the matter in hand. Walls were tapped, chimneys examined, cupboards peered into, and the light of bull's-eye lanterns was made to startle spiders in many a dark corner of the room.

"This here wall's hollow!" exclaimed a policeman, suddenly, as he started upon finding a certain resonant echo to the blows he bestowed at one side of the room.

"Most likely," said the sergeant, drily. "Why, where are your brains, man? Don't you see that the staircase is behind?"

The man relieved himself of his hard hat, wiped his forehead, and then resumed his search, till, the sergeant declaring himself satisfied, a movement was made for the upper regions.

"There aint nothing up there, so now then," cried D. Wragg, desperately. "I protest against all this here. You needn't go up; and don't you make no mistake, I aint a-goin' to stand having my place searched without a warrant. I'll have it out of some on you for this."

As he spoke, D. Wragg started to the foot of the attic staircase, and made as if he would have barred the way; but the sergeant laid one firm hand upon his shoulder, and D. Wragg seemed to shrink away from that touch like the leaves of a mimosa. He glided aside, as if in dread lest the hand that touched him should remain there, and his face grew ashy and careworn—abject, too, in the extreme—until he encountered the triumphant grins of Mr. John Screwby, when he roused himself directly, and stared his tormentor full in the face.

"You see, my friend," said the sergeant, upon whom not one of D. Wragg's changes of countenance was lost—"you see, my friend, now that we are up so high, we may as well go up a little higher—save coming again, perhaps."

D. Wragg muttered uneasily, and glanced right and left, and then the creaking stairs were ascended, when he moved slowly off.

"Stop him there, will you!" cried the sergeant, who saw through the little dealer's design.

"What d'yer mean? what's all this?" cried D. Wragg, struggling with the man, who caught the wrist of his coat in a tight grasp. "If you're going to take a fellow up, take him up; but don't get playing at fast and loose. Don't you make no mistake, I aint a-going to stand this sorter thing. I aint got his dog, as I've told you 'arf-a-dozen times. But some on you shall pay for it, so I tell you."

D. Wragg's evasion being stayed, and his small person forced to the front, he was one of those who filled up the landing by a couple of doors—one strongly padlocked, and the other cobwebbed and dirty, as if it had not been opened for years.

"Now, then, where are the keys of these doors?" said the sergeant.

"Break 'em open while you are about it," cried D. Wragg, in tones that bordered upon a howl. "But don't you make no mistake. I protest against this here once more. I aint a-going to have my house sacked like this here for nothing. I should

ha' thought as them gents would ha' stopped it all; but never mind, I don't care. It sha'n't go to the bottom without some on you hearin' of it."

"Hold your tongue, will you, and give up the keys," said the sergeant, who looked just a trifle less impassive than usual.

"What is it you all mean?" cried D. Wragg, excitedly—"what is it you are all thinking about? You don't suppose as I'm giving up my respectable business of a naturalist to go in for burking and doctors' work—do you? You don't suppose as I know anything of the young chap as is gone? Don't you make no mistake. I can see through it all. You've been crammed and filled up with all sorts o' gammon; but I wonder at you, Sergeant Prout, a listening to what such a thing as *that* says."

D. Wragg pointed, as he spoke, at Mr. John Screwby, which gentleman had, from a scarcity of watches, and from doubts as to the probability of his staying so long as he was wanted, been brought up from stage to stage, to stand now shuffling from foot to foot, and staring first at the irate dealer, now at the door which concealed the interior of the attic from his gaze.

"Somebody shall pay for this, though," cried D. Wragg, "as I've said afore, and as I'll say half a score o' times."

As he spoke, he looked full at Sir Richard, as if identifying him with the some one who should be made to pay, although at the present time no mean sum of the baronet's money had made its way into his pockets. But, at last, seeing that Sergeant Prout would not be trifled with, and that in another moment the door or doors would be kicked down, he produced the keys, with a great many protestations, ending at last in a perfect whine of misery, one that strangely reminded the eager bystanders of the dogs below.

But the keys produced, D. Wragg's importance decreased upon the instant; for, though there were those present who trembled at the thought of the door being thrown back, the majority were devoured by curiosity—the morbid feeling which used to take a crowd to an execution, and even at the present day attracts hundreds to the Old Bailey that they may catch a glimpse of the black flag, and imagine for themselves the horrors going on behind the grim, black, stony walls.

There were no stony walls here, though—only a few slight boards between the gazers and the mystery whose solution they were so eager to read.

"Here, stop him! will you?" cried the sergeant. "Have you any brains at all, Smith?"

P.C. Smith raised his hand to his head, as if to feel whether those thought-producers, brains, were really there; but he contented himself with a vicious scratch, as he once more took hold of D. Wragg, that gentleman having made another attempt to limp away.

"Don't you make no mistake," half whimpered the dealer, rubbing his hands together, bending down as if in pain, and limping down to the extent of his tether—to wit, his and the policeman's arm. "I'll be squared for this; just you see if I aint."

"Very well—very well," exclaimed the sergeant, with something of excitement in his tones; "only

don't make quite so much noise about it. Now, then," he cried, as he unlocked the fastener and threw open the rickety door, whose rusty hinges creaked dismally; while the door itself was stopped, when little more than ajar, by the warped framework, which forced one corner upon the floor.

"Now I hope you're happy!" said D. Wragg.

"Not yet, not yet," said the sergeant; "but we mean to culminate soon. Now, then, pass him here, Smith. That's right! Now, Mr. Wragg, you go first, and we'll follow."

Again there was the dealer's strong resemblance to the ragged terrier brought out; for the sergeant treated him precisely as a keeper would a dog that he was about to place in some fox's hole, D. Wragg being thrust forward into the room—going, though, most unwillingly; and had he suddenly broken out into a sharp, wailing bark, no one would have felt much surprise.

The sergeant laid his hands upon D. Wragg's shoulders as he forced him in, peering over the said shoulders into the dingy place ahead; and then he drew back for a few moments.

"Here, Smith, you take my place," he said, and the constable went next; while his leader crossed the low landing to where, arm-in-arm, stood Garth and Sir Richard. "Just a moment, please, sir," he said to Garth, in a low voice; and then aloud, to the others present, "Stand back there, will you—I go next."

"What do you want to say?" said Garth, glancing uneasily at the sergeant's stern face, as the latter turned his eyes for a moment to where they had left Sir Richard.

"Only, sir," said the sergeant, in a whisper, "that if I was in your place, I should think it my duty, at any cost, to get him away."

CHAPTER XXXII.—DISCOVERIES.

GARTH shook his head, for he knew that the sergeant counselled an impossibility.

"Well, sir, I thought it my duty to advise," said the sergeant.

"Quite right—quite right," said Garth, hastily; "but he would not stir an inch. Now, pray, end this horrible suspense."

Garth looked round once more to see that the women were not present; and then, with Sir Richard, the other constable, and one or two strangers that were present, he passed into the low, dingy, sloping-ceiled room.

There had once evidently been a partition, but this had been removed, and the attics turned into one long place; so that the whole of the top floor could be seen through at a glance, with its lumber of old cages, bundles of dried herbs, baskets of feathers, and broken furniture—chairs, lame of one leg, halt and rickety tables, and an old washstand.

In three different corners, chained to staples in the wall, and each with its straw bed, were as many wretched captives wasting their days in their lofty prison. But there were but three dogs kept there, for reasons best known to the occupants of the house.

"Nothing here," was the mental remark of the sergeant, as he made his light play about the place,

its rays falling strangely upon each of the dogs in turn, and eliciting howls that were doleful in the extreme.

That light, though, was allowed to rest longest upon the fourth corner of the room, where there were three well-filled sacks and a large flat basket.

"Look outside the window, there's a parapet out there in the front. One of you had better crawl along a little each way, and see if you can make anything out," said the sergeant, who, directly after, turned to another of his men. "Here, you!" he exclaimed, "climb up there," and he pointed to a half-closed trap-door in the ceiling.

His orders were obeyed, the bystanders watching eagerly the progress of events, till the man who had nervously forced his way through the trap, coming back covered with whitewash and cobwebs, which he brushed impatiently from his uniform—

"Well?" said the sergeant, on his descent by means of the broken washstand and chair, which had been used for escalating purposes.

"No one been up there this side o' six months ago, I'll swear," said the man. "The cobwebs would have told you that, if you'd liked to look."

The sergeant turned sharply upon his muttering subordinate; but his attention was taken off by the return of the man who had been sent outside to examine the gutter.

"Well?" said the sergeant again, as this man climbed back.

"Well, I aint seen nothing," said the latter, dragging one leg after him into the room. "Quiet, will you!" he cried to a dog, which bayed at him furiously. "You can go along out there for the best part of a mile if you like, dodging in and out; and it seems to be a reg'lar rats' run from winder to winder. There's some nice games carried on, I'll be bound; and any manner of thing might be done here or there, and hidden from place to place, without us being a bit the wiser."

"How many men would it take to make a good search?" said the sergeant.

"Hundred," said his subordinate, gruffly, "would be nowhere. You'd want a man at every door and at every attic window, and when you tried to stop them, they'd slip out somewhere else."

The sergeant stood for a moment thinking, and then he made a step towards the sacks, looking curiously at the dog-fancier.

"Shouldn't wonder if there was a tale hanging to every one of those dogs," he said grimly. "But what's in these sacks?"

"Now, look here—look here!" exclaimed D. Wragg, assuming not to have heard the last remark. "Don't you make no mistake. You've searched all from top to bottom now, gents, so let's have an end of all this game."

"Stand aside, will you?" cried the sergeant, roughly.

And forcing D. Wragg aside, he strode up to the sacks, threw them down one after the other, and felt through them.

"Pooh! Corks!" he exclaimed, contemptuously, after a few moments' examination. "Don't know what you want with corks up here, though, master. What's in the basket? Tied down, eh?"

"Now, look here; don't you make no mistake—don't now—I purtest agen it all."

With a fierce rush, D. Wragg threw himself upon the great basket, clinging frantically thereto, and struggling viciously, and kicking with his club boots at the men who tried to drag him away.

A sharp scuffle ensued, for the dealer clung tightly to the great flat hamper; and it was not till after quite a battle that D. Wragg was dragged from his hold, to stand panting, hot, and glaring of eye, gazing from one to the other.

"Now, do, sir—do take my advice," said the sergeant, once more drawing Garth aside. "I tell you frankly I don't like the look of things; and only think of the old gentleman, sir, if anything should prove to be wrong. You'd better take him away; you had, indeed."

He left Garth, and, as if seeking to make delays, went and spoke to the policemen, and then threatened to handcuff the dealer if he did not quietly submit.

"I don't care," said D. Wragg; "you may handcuff me and legcuff me, and put a collar round my neck, if you like; but I aint going to stand still and see my place pulled all to pieces for nothing at all. Don't you make—"

"There, hold your tongue!" cried the sergeant; and he turned round to gaze at Garth, who had slowly crossed to where Sir Richard was standing, pondering the while upon the detective's meaning looks and words.

He laid his hand upon the old man's arm; but Sir Richard, on hearing his words, although he had shudderingly turned from where lay the basket, sternly refused to go, and moved Garth aside, as he grew more earnest and pressing.

Sergeant Prout shrugged his shoulders, and muttered something about the obstinacy of old folks. Then he turned away; and as a groan burst from D. Wragg, and he struggled with his captors, the basket was approached, the string that had tied the lid down cut, the said lid set quite free, dashed open, and then the sergeant was gazing excitedly down at the straw which covered something with which the great wicker case was filled.

"Here, hold the lantern here, somebody," cried the sergeant.

And one of the men who held D. Wragg darted eagerly forward, to make the rays of his bull's-eye fall full upon the straw, when, after parting the straw a little, the lid was dashed down again, and the sergeant sat upon it, wiping his hot forehead.

"Pah! what a fool I am!" he ejaculated the next instant. "But, really, for a while I thought—Well, Mr. Wragg, I think we've done up here for the present; but, 'pon my soul, if I had a lot of stolen hams in my attic, I don't think I should tell the police, quite so plainly as you did, that every one of them belonged to some one else."

CHAPTER XXXIII.—DISAPPOINTMENT.

FIVE minutes after, his brain in a whirl from the reaction that had taken place—when, wound up to expect some great horror, he had found nothing but that which was trifling and absurd—Sir Richard Ambley was seated in the Frenchman's

room; for he had turned sick and faint, and brandy had been sought—Linny eagerly fetching glass and water, as she gazed with sympathizing face in the countenance of the suffering father.

"You look young, and good, and pure-minded," said the old man, feebly, as he looked fixedly in Linny's fair young face. "Listen to me, my child—for you are quite a child to me; perhaps you know that I am seeking my boy—my only child. I can see through it now. In his folly he was attracted here by you. I don't reproach you—I say nothing harsh, only pray you humbly, as his father, to tell me where they have placed him. Is he dead? Has he been inveigled into some den for the sake of his money? Only tell me—only let me be at peace—and I will bless you. Do you know? Do not be afraid to answer. You shall be protected, even if it were for life, should it prove necessary. The man below has sworn that my son entered this house and did not come out again."

"Yes, Jack Screwby," said the sergeant, interposing, and nodding his head as he spoke.

"Tell me, then, my child," continued Sir Richard; "and I will bless you—pray for you—offer up an old man's prayers for your happiness; only set me free from this horrible suspense. Tell me—even if he is dead."

Linny sobbed as she gazed in the old man's face, and then, with an effort, she exclaimed—

"'Tis all false—every word. That man is a bad, cruel fellow, and my father's enemy. What he has said is not true."

"You are in league with them," said the old man, turning from her.

"No—no—no! What I said is true—quite true," sobbed Linny.

But the old man refused to hear her, and turned to speak to Janet; but she shrank from him, cowering in a corner with a child-like display of fear, and only glancing at him from time to time, as if horror-stricken.

"You see," said Sir Richard—"she knows all, and dare not approach to tell it. That there is some fearful mystery here I feel more and more convinced; but, doubtless, in God's good time, all will be brought to light."

He rose as he spoke, and approached Janet, who shrank from him more and more, waving her hand to keep him off her, and each moment growing more frightened and hysterical.

"Come, my friends," said Sir Richard, drawing back with a bitter sigh, as he saw the uselessness of pressing inquiry in Janet's case—"let us go. Constantly, you will sift this matter to the very bottom."

The sergeant nodded shortly, and Sir Richard turned towards the door; but Linny flew to him, and caught one of his hands.

"Oh, sir!" she cried, "can you not believe me? Indeed—indeed I have spoken the truth. Your son did come many times; but I hate him," she cried, naively. "I would not, though—nor would any one here—hurt a hair of his head. I could not help his coming. He knew that I did not like him here, and he would come all the same. If he was here on that Tuesday night, I did not even see him. I am sorry—indeed I am—and pity you from the bottom

of my heart; for we have our feelings, even as you rich people have."

"But not feeling enough to ease a poor old man's heart," said Sir Richard, coldly, as, thrusting her back, he took another step towards the door.

"He does not believe me—he does not believe me!" sobbed Linny; and then, clasping her little white hands together, she exclaimed, "Does no one believe what I say?"

"I do, Linny—from my soul!" exclaimed a deep voice; and, stepping forward, Robert Garth caught her clasped-together hands in his, as the young girl joyfully met his gaze.

But this was but for a moment. The next instant had hardly passed before her eyes fell, she hastily drew back to where Janet cowered in a chair, and stayed there until one by one the others went out, leaving them the sole occupants of the room.

"Are they all gone?" whispered Janet, at last, from where she had hidden her face in Linny's breast.

"Yes—all—all," said the sobbing girl.

"I could not bear to look at the suffering old man," said Janet, huskily. "It seemed to me as if he would be able to read in my face all that I feel; and so I acted like a frightened child, and he must have looked upon me as half an idiot. But it is very horrible, Linny; and I seem to see the poor boy always before my eyes, with his white forehead all dabbled in blood, and his face pale and ghost-like. I dream of him so every night, and I know I feel as if something dreadful had happened. But what does it all mean?"

"Oh, hush! oh, hush!" sobbed Linny; while Mrs. Winks, who had just returned, buried her face in her apron, and—seating herself upon the floor, as being more lowly than a chair—she rocked herself to and fro, in the true sympathy she felt.

"Why did they come here at all?" cried Janet, fiercely. "We were happy, in our poor way, before that; and now they have made us wretched for life. But, Linny, Linny, this sight—this horrid vision—which I always have before me"—and, as she spoke, she looked straight before her, with hot and straining eyes—"what does it mean? I feel sometimes that I cannot bear it; and hark! Linny, Linny!" she cried, excitedly, "shall I tell all?"

CHAPTER XXXIV.—SISTERS IN CARE.

LINNY tried hard to soothe her companion; but her efforts seemed to be absolutely in vain, so wild and excited had Janet grown. At times her hearers shuddered as they listened to her exclamations, Mrs. Winks even going so far as to glance over her shoulder to make sure that nothing of the kind described was really present.

For a time the poor girl calmed down, and Linny began to hope that her words had had effect; but soon there came a repetition, and Janet raised her head, to stare straight before her, as she exclaimed—

"It seems at times as if I could not bear it—as if it would send me mad; for he is in pain, I know—I feel—he is wounded, perhaps dead; and oh, Linny," she whispered now, her face—her voice—softening as she leaned her forehead upon her companion's shoulder, "I love him so—so dearly."

Kissing her tenderly, smoothing her hair, and weeping with her, Linny tried to whisper comfort to the fluttering, aching heart, beating so wildly within that deformed breast.

But all seemed in vain; the troubled spirit refused to be comforted; for it knew its desolation, and that, even if Lionel Ambley were found to be living and well, there was no hope, no rest, for her.

"Try not to cry so much, dear," said Linny, simply; "it will make your head ache."

"Better the head than the heart, Linny," cried Janet, passionately. "Oh, I wish I was dead—I wish I was dead!"

"Hush, hush, darling! how can you?" whispered Linny, now weeping abundantly. "Try, do try, to keep it back."

"Yes—yes," said Janet, with a sigh that was more like a groan. "I will be patient—I will try and bear it; and you will try and pray with me, Linny, that he may be safe and well, and restored to the good old man, his father. Oh, how I longed to be near him, to go on my knees by his side! And when he asked me to come, it was almost more than I could bear. Something seemed to be drawing me to him; and, again, something was dragging me back. Linny, how do people feel when they go mad? Is it anything like what I have been suffering these last few days?"

"Did you not promise me that you would be calm?" whispered Linny, soothingly.

"Yes—yes, I know I did; and I am trying. But you will pray, too, Linny—will you not?"

"Yes," sobbed Linny, as she clung close to the poor suffering girl—"I will pray too."

"But *he* believed you, Linny!" Janet exclaimed, suddenly, "and came to your side then, like a lover should. I was in trouble; but, all the same, I could see his proud look. He loves you—he loves you!"

"Oh, hush—hush!" cried Linny, wearily; "am I not unhappy enough? It can never—never be. And, besides," she added, proudly, and her pale cheeks flamed up, "does he not love somebody else?"

"Here's somebody a-coming," cried Mrs. Winks, suddenly starting into life from the bundle of collapsed clothes that seemed to be heaped the minute before upon the floor; "and, oh! what faces we three have got—all swelled up with crying so, as was never seen. What's going to come of us all? for, dear me, if it aint for all the world like a scene in a play, with the lovers all going crosswise, and the others crooked; and I declare once if I didn't think as the curtain was going to come down in a minute, and I should have to fetch my basket. But, there, do wipe your eyes, my dears—there's somebody a-coming, and it's glad I shall be when it comes to the last act, and everybody's made happy ever after—except Jack Screwby, as is the bad villin of the whole piece. Here, dry your eyes, do."

Mrs. Winks gave her own optics a tremendous scrub with her apron as she spoke—drying them, certainly, but at the same time making them far more red. Then she made an elephantine kind of movement towards the door, holding it to with one hand—signalling with the other to her young companions to remove the tears, and nodding and frowning till there was a modest tap, and a voice said—

"May I come in?"

"Ah!" exclaimed the stout dame, smiling; "it's you, is it, Monsieur Canau?"

CHAPTER XXXV.—D. WRAGG IS EXPLANATORY.

D. WRAGG seemed to think that, in spite of his words, the mistake might be on his side if he made any complaints about the treatment he had received from the police. Once or twice he bristled up, and seemed to be making ready for a grand eruption; but second thoughts always came in time to calm him down; and those second thoughts, as a rule, related to the three dogs in the attic, the sacks of new corks, and the large, flat hamper of Westphalia hams, respecting the possession of which goods he would not have liked to be too closely questioned.

That the police still had an eye upon his place he was sure; for he had many little quiet hints to that effect from friends outside, who knew a policeman in plain clothes quite as well as if he were in uniform, and who, in consequence, were rather given to laughing at the popular notion that plain-clothes officers were able to mix here and there unknown with any society they might choose. But, as the police seemed disposed to confine their attentions to a little quiet surveillance, and in other respects left him quite at peace, D. Wragg did not conceive that it would be advisable to beard the lions of the public order in their dens; so he winked to himself, watched anxiously every bystander who struck him as being at all like a policeman in mufti, and contented himself with talking largely to his confidential friends; though how far he was confidential remains to be proved.

"Look here, you know," he said to Monsieur Canau, one morning, when they had met on that neutral ground the passage, and adjourned to the shop, where they stood looking at one another in a curious, distrustful fashion—"look here, you know," said D. Wragg; "we're old friends, and you've lodged with me goodness knows how many years. I don't mind speaking out before you. But don't you make no mistake, there aint nothing kept back by me. As to them dorgs—how could I help about the dorgs, when friends comes to me and says, 'My dorg aint quite the thing to-day—I think I'll get you to give him a dust o' your distemper powder.' And another one says, 'I wish you'd take my dorg for a bit, and see if you think it's mange as is a-comin' on.' While dreckly after comes another with a Skye wiry, and says as he isn't satisfied with the set of his dog's ears, nor the way in which he sets up his tail. Well, in course I has to see to these things for them, my place being a sorter orspittle, and that's how them dorgs come to be upstairs; while the way in which they've come on since I've had 'em is something wonderful."

Monsieur Canau nodded, and began to roll up a cigarette with clever, manipulating fingers, keeping his eyes half-closed the while, and smiling in a strange, reserved way that might have meant amusement, contempt, or merely sociability.

D. Wragg saw it, and became, directly, more impressive in his manner.

"Look here, you know," said Wragg; "I don't

mind speaking out before you. Don't you make no mistake; we're old friends, and this is how it is. Don't you see, it's all a plant as that Jack Screwby got up, because I as good as kicked him out—a vagabond! Wanted to come sneaking here after—



but there," he jerked out, throwing himself into quite a convulsion of spasmodic kicks, and scattering imaginary turnip-seed by the handful—"I won't talk about it no more. Only look here, you know; you're my lodger, and I like my lodgers to look up to their landlord with respect; so don't you make no mistake, and go for to think as them corks aint all square, because they air—square as square."

Canau nodded, and lit his cigarette.

"Look here, you know," continued D. Wragg, "it's like this here: a man comes to you, and he says, 'I want two score o' blue rocks'—pigeons, you know, for trap-shooting—a thing as you furriners can't understand, though you may come to, some day; well, he says, 'I want two score o' blue rocks, and I ain't got no money, but I've got corks'—and corks, you know, is money if there aint no money, same as, when there warn't no money, people used to swop. Well, then, we settle it that way—wally for wally. He has blue rocks and I has corks; and he'll sell his blue rocks, for money, to the swells; and I shall sell my corks, for money, to a chap I know as makes ginger-pop. And now what's the matter? No one can't say, after that, as them corks aint square, can they?"

"But there was the ham," said Canau, disposed to cavil.

"Don't you make no mistake about that. That there ham's square enough; nothing couldn't be squarer. They like ham, you know, those gals do; and Mother Winks is mortal partial to a rasher. That's why I laid in a stock."

"Um!" said Canau, exhaling a thin cloud of smoke. "And about—about the young man?"

"Well," said D. Wragg, looking sidewise out of

his little eyes, "perhaps I warn't quite square over that; for, you see, the young chap was all on the stare about Linny, and I did think as he seemed ready to buy half the shop if she served him. We might as well make a few pounds extry, for times is werry hard, you know, Mr. Canau, and expenses is werry great; things runs up 'orrid."

Canau smoked fiercely, his yellow forehead growing knit and angry-looking; but he did not speak.

"She didn't like it, though," continued D. Wragg; "and don't you make no mistake. I was sorry for it afterwards, and called myself a bumble-footed old beast when I see her a-crying. But don't you make no mistake; as soon as I see she didn't like it, why, bless her little heart, I says, 'Don't you go more in the shop than you like, my pet,' I says; and, bless her, she got her little arms round my neck, and kissed me, ah! a good dozen times."

D. Wragg seemed to be so affected by his recollections, that he drew out a pocket handkerchief and removed a faint drop of moisture from the corner of one eye, and another from the right side of his nose with the stem of his pipe, Canau nodding satisfaction the while many times over—seeming, too, more tranquil of spirit; for the puffs of smoke from his cigarette were evolved far more slowly, and went curling gently upwards towards the shop ceiling.

"I like natur', Mr. Canau," said D. Wragg; "and, being a spoiled child of natur' myself, I always did like natur'. Linny's like, as you may say, natur's cream all sewed up together. Dorgs is natur', and all these here's natur'."

D. Wragg paused, inserted his left thumb in the armhole of his vest, and, with the other hand gracefully wound round the stem of his pipe, indicated in turn the caged prisoners around.

"I loved natur', Mr. Canau, when I was a boy, and went bird's-nestin' and ketchin' frogs instead of going to school, and took to the serciety of bird-ketchers, which is men of nat'ral habits as is in some things a pleasure to know. It was my love of natur', Mr. Canau, as fust set me beginning trade—selling 'edgehogs and greenfinches, and nestys of young birds in the streets; and it was natur' as made me to prosper and get into this here large way of business. I'm a London man, bred and born; though justice warn't done me in either case, for I'm wide awake to what's wrong with me; but I'll back myself in nat'ral history to tell anything you like, from a 'ork down to a tom-tit, and t'other way from a mouse up to a helephant—if so be as they're all English. For, you see, I never went travelling, only once, when I went round for a whole year with Wombwell's Nadgery, feeding the wild beasties, and helping to put the carrywans straight, and all from a love of natur', Mr. Canau; though you did get rather more natur' there than you liked, 'specially as regards smells, and being kep' awake of a night by the hyenas a-laughing, or them great furrin cats letting go for a hooray—let alone the other things. And that was why I left it, and took to dogs—sellin' washed pups at carriage doors, warranted never to get no bigger; and, look here," he continued, with a grin, "if ever you should take to that there trade, I'll put you up to a breed as the pups is the werry

smallest in natur', and washes the whitest in natur'; but as for the size they grows up to in a swell's house, where they're fed up like bloated aristocrats, with their chicking and weal cutlet, and all that sorter thing, and the colour they gets to—my!"

Mr. D. Wragg chuckled loudly as he described this freak of "natur'"; but it was observable that the puffs of smoke from Canau's cigarette came swiftly, as he still watched the dealer with a strange, indescribable expression.

CHAPTER XXXVI.—FENCING.

"I LOVE natur', Mr. Canau," said D. Wragg, "and a day's outing; and I always did love babies and little girls, for they is natur'—the prettiest bits of natur', and I love 'em. I can always kiss them little soft bits of natur'—babies—if so be as they are clean; for, to be dirty down here in the Dials 'tis their natur', too. But, you see, they aint werry fond of being kissed by me, not being a handsome man. Natur' never took no pains with me when she made me, you know. I don't believe as I wur ever finished, and, 'cordingly, I wear this thick boot. I might have got married, certainly; but *she* wouldn't have me; so I turned sulky, and then I brought little Linny home here, and says to Mother Winks, who was then a widdier, keeping house for me, and werry low-spirited then—for her poor master was just dead, having fallen flat on the stage, being one of the carpenters at a theatre, and up somewhere in the flies—and says to Mother Winks, I says, 'Cheer up, old lass, and take care of this 'ere.'"

"Why, wheer on earth did you get the little thing?" she says.

"Never you mind," said I; 'it's mine, and only



a noo specimen of my love of natur', and as pretty a little bit o' pink natur' as ever I did see.'

"Why, Lord love you, if you'd ha' seen how that poor thing took to that there baby, kissing and loving, and setting it in a cradle made of two chairs and a pillow, and then fallin' down and worshipping'

of it! It were as good as a play—better too, ever so much. Why, if she didn't go and sell all the rags she could get together, and odds and ends, to an old friend of hers as she knew in Lower Sales-place, because she thought as she'd get the best price there;



though they all says they give the best price, and don't, which is their natur' too. Don't you make no mistake; but what should she sell 'em for, do you think? You'd never guess. Why, to buy two things—a clothes-basket, as should do for a cradle and for washing-days as well, and a pair o' list slippers for me. Just to sidle up and get the right side o' me, thinks you. Not a bit of it. Mother Winks and I always understood one another. She wornt a marrying woman no more nor I were a marrying man, arjer setting my affections and then being thrown overboard. No, Mr. Canau; them soft list slippers was to put over my boots so as I shouldn't make no noise and wake that baby; and if she aint hid that thick-soled boot, lots of times, only letting me have it when I was obliged to go out.

"I only used to laugh, though it were awkward, making me jig up and down like that begging chap as pretends to have Saint Witer's dance. But I didn't care.

"That, you know, was only about nine or ten months before you came; and I put it to you, is there a prettier bit o' natur' anywhere for miles round?"

"But you never told me all this before," said Canau.

"Not I," said D. Wragg. "Why should I? Here, make yourself a squib or two out of my 'bacco, sir. I do wonder as you never took to a pipe, though; for, don't you make no mistake, them little things of yours always tastes of the paper. I never told you nothing about Linny before, but that's how it was. I put you up to taking that poor girl upstairs, knowing what a comfort she'd be to you; and, though she aint turned out 'ansum, I do say as it almost beats natur' to hear her, as you may say, almost making that there fiddle speak. But this here set-out has quite upset me, Mr. Canau, and I don't think I shall have any more to do with dorgs. I'll keep to birds only; for only fancy having the police

in your house, and wanting to make out as you've got a young fellow burked away somewhere, and frightening the poor gals almost to death. You know it's nothing but that upset as has made poor Mother Winks slip out to get that there ginger-beer bottle of hers filled so many times. She don't generally do more in that way than we do with our 'bacco."

"I 'ave listen to all you say," said Monsieur Canau now, for D. Wragg was almost breathless, "but this does not explain. Where is the young man?"

"How should I know?" snarled D. Wragg, fiercely. "You don't suppose I've had any hand in it, do you? How should I know where he is?"

"But he came here, and he is gone," said the Frenchman.

"Well, suppose he is," said D. Wragg, sulkily—"he came here, and he is gone. How should I know where he is gone? Into the sewers, or down the river, for aught I know. Do you know where he's gone?"

"Who? Who? Do I know?" cried Canau, excitedly. "No, no—no, no; I know nothing. I have not seen him here, or there, or anywhere at all lately. I cannot know anything about him—nothing at all."

"No more don't I," growled D. Wragg, sullenly. "You do not? You will swear you know nothing at all of the poor young man?"

"Course I would," said D. Wragg, stoutly. "He's got dropped on to by somebody, and no wonder. Dessay it's part of Jack Screwby's lot; but I aint going to blow upon anybody. He thought that he was very cunning in setting it down at my door, so as to get it away from his; but he didn't work much out of it, anyhow. The young chick was safe to come in for it, though, flashing about streets like these here with his gold watches, and chains, and rings, when there's hundreds of hungry mouths about, and hundreds of fingers itching to snatch at 'em. And, since you come to that, don't you make no mistake; I never does nothing as aint honest. But, mind you, I don't say as Jack Screwby knows all about it. I'd just as soon say you do; for you know as you didn't like his coming."

"Who, I—I know? Not I, not nothing at all," cried Canau, very heartily. "But I will take one more little pinch of your tobaque, Monsieur Wragg," he said, with the extreme of cold politeness, "and then you will excuse—I go for my promenade."

D. Wragg gazed curiously at his sallow lodger as he prepared himself another cigarette, till, as if feeling that he was watched, Canau stealthily raised his eyes till they encountered the dealer's, when for awhile the two men stood, each trying to read the other's thoughts.

Lowering his lids, Monsieur Canau lit his cigarette, raised his pinched hat a few inches, and then slowly left the shop.

CHAPTER XXXVII.—SCREWBYS REVENGE.

IT was as patent to Monsieur Canau as to D. Wragg that the Brownjohn-street house was under police surveillance; for there was generally some stranger loitering about—one very ordinary-

looking individual trying hard not to seem as if watching the former as he went out.

But D. Wragg was not deceived in the slightest degree; for, besides his great experience of "natur," he had attempted to acquire something of art—to wit, police art—enough to enable him to point out, with the accompaniment of a peculiar wink, the plain-clothes officer to his French lodger, who had, however, only replied by a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders, and a look in another direction.

But D. Wragg did not look another way. Evidently bent upon wearing the aspect of utter defiance of the law, he stood now at his shop door, smoking fiercely, giving himself twitches and jerks that quite scared such of his stock-in-trade as was in close proximity, and sent his dogs shrinking back, snapping and snarling, into their hutches and kennels whenever he turned their way.

Mr. John Screwby and he had encountered more than once, the former gentleman making a practice of insulting him; and, as if out of revenge for his non-success in obtaining the two hundred pounds reward, staring up at the front of the house, or making believe, with a grin, to peer down into the cellar—movements which made D. Wragg gnash his teeth angrily.

And upon this day it was fated that, so soon as Monsieur Canau was out of sight, Mr. John Screwby should appear, loafing along on the opposite side of the road, his cap over his ears, a piece of straw in his mouth, and his hands in his pockets; staring heavily here and there after something fresh, till he came in sight of D. Wragg, when he grinned spitefully; and, walking slowly on, stopped at last opposite the dealer's house, to stare heavily up at the attic windows, shading his eyes, leaning a little on this side and a little on that, as if eagerly searching for something to be seen. Then, according to custom, he crossed the roadway to gaze for a moment at the cellar-grating; and then, fixing his eyes upon the dirty glass of the window below that grating, he began to walk slowly backwards and forwards, totally ignoring the presence of D. Wragg the while.

"There'll be a row directly, Mr. Jack Screwby," said the dealer, aloud, as he stood watching the other's actions.

Mr. Screwby took not the slightest notice of the speaker; only stopped short, as if he had caught a glimpse of something.

"I wonder wot they've done with the pore chap," he said at last, quite in a loud voice. "I shouldn't a bit be surprised if they've buried him in the kitchen."

"If I could have my way with you, young fellow, I'd serve you out for this," said D. Wragg, shaking his fist, to the great amusement of a small crowd that was fast collecting.

"What would you do with me, eh?" said Screwby, with a grin; "burke me, like you did the young chap as came arter his dorg?"

"You wouldn't dare to talk like that, Jack Screwby, if I was a man of your own size and age," said D. Wragg, viciously.

"Perhaps I should, perhaps I shouldn't," sneered Screwby. "But how about the pore young man?"

D. Wragg made a movement as if to dart at his tormentor, to the great delight of the crowd, espe-

cially as at that moment the dealer stumbled and nearly fell.

"Don't let him come a-nigh you," said Screwby, "or he'll serve you the same as he did the pore young man."

Here there was another shout; and the popular feeling seemed to be growing so strong that, raging within himself, D. Wragg began to think it would be prudent to beat a retreat; and he did so, followed by a loud jeering laugh.

But even now he was not to have peace; for he had hardly reached the sanctuary of his own room before a couple of small boys, probably incited thereto by Mr. John Screwby, thrust their heads in at the shop door, to roar at the utmost pitch of their shrill treble—

"Who burked the boy?" fleeing the next moment, as if for their very lives, on hearing the scraping of the dealer's chair.

This was not a tithe of the unpleasantry that D. Wragg was called upon to bear; for Mr. Screwby was exceedingly bitter against the house of Wragg, inasmuch as there had been no discovery made—not even the trace or tiny ravelling of a thread sufficient to form a clue—and Sergeant Prout having strongly negatived the necessity for rewarding him, even in the slightest degree; though, unseen by the police, Garth had slipped a sovereign into his hand.

But what was a sovereign as compared to the golden heap that two hundred would have made; and then—what things it would have bought!

Mr. John Screwby had already gloated over several articles, notably a brown fur cap—dyed cat—which he coveted hugely; but now all his air-built castle was swept away, and, to make matters ten times worse, he had been requested by Sergeant Prout not to show himself anywhere near a certain number in Regent-street any more.

This was rather a serious command; for it was, indeed, a special order, although couched under the form of a request. To a gentleman in his circumstances matters might turn out very unpleasantly if he slighted the sergeant's impressive words.

Under these circumstances, though otherwise not caring a jot for the fate of Lionel Ambley, Mr. John Screwby, failing money, determined to have the full measure of his revenge, brimming over if it were possible; and, therefore, he joined himself to the party whose every effort was directed towards the elucidation of the mystery which had prostrated Sir Richard so that, after struggling most manfully to fight against bodily weakness, he lay at his son's chambers in a state upon which the medical men consulted declined to give a decided opinion.

To a bystander he seemed weak and perfectly helpless; but a few words relating to information would galvanize him into life once more. And so it was that, one afternoon, when a rough water-side-looking fellow presented himself, Sir Richard immediately ordered him to be shown up into his presence.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.—A NEW CLUE.

"H'E'S been out again, sir," said Mr. Still to Garth, as he entered the passage.

"What, Sir Richard?"

"Yes, sir. A man came down from Bermondsey way, and said he had some news; and I daren't refuse him, you know, sir. It might be valuable; and it wouldn't do for me to be shutting off the only bit of information that might be worth anything."

"What kind of man was it?" said Garth.

"Poor Jack sort of fellow, from river stairs, sir; and I told Sir Richard, and he had him up, and then they went off together in a cab, and he's just come back, sir."

"What madness!" exclaimed Garth.

And he hurried up the stairs, to find Sir Richard seated upon a low chair, with his face buried in his hands.

He looked up, though, as the young man entered, to gaze at him in a confused, dazed way, as if he did not quite comprehend the meaning of his coming.

"Was not this rather foolish of you, Sir Richard?" said Garth, gently. "Indeed, you are in no condition for going out. I see how it is, though; and I feared it, when you put in the advertisement. The very name of the chambers in Regent-street was enough to bring down a host of reward-seekers. Why did you not take my advice, and refer them to the police?"

"I couldn't, Garth—I could not," groaned Sir Richard. "You do not know what I feel, or you would not speak to me as you do. Poor lad—poor lad!"

Garth was silent for a few minutes, and then he spoke again—

"It was, of course, a useless quest, sir?"

"I can't tell—I don't know," said Sir Richard, feebly. "I am confused and troubled in the head, Garth; and I've been trying hard to recollect what it all was, and what I did; but as soon as I grasp anything, it seems to glide from me again."

"Lie down, Sir Richard," said Garth, quietly.

And he passed an arm beneath that of the old man.

"Not yet—not yet—not yet, Garth. I think I have it now. Yes; this man came, and said they had found some one by the river-side, and I went half-way with him; and then I suppose that I must have fainted, for I can recollect no more, only that I was brought back—or, no, I think I must have found my way back by myself. This weakness is a cruel trial."

"You must put it to the test no more, Sir Richard," exclaimed Garth, firmly. "Try and believe that you have a trusty representative in me. Indeed, I will leave no stone unturned."

"I know it, Garth—I know it," said Sir Richard; "and, indeed, I do try; but this suspense is, at times, more than I can bear."

At the young man's persuasion, he now went to lie down, giving up, in a weary, vacant way, the effort to recollect where the man had been about to take him. He tried to recal the names, till Garth felt alarmed lest the brain should be going; and it was only by Garth promising to follow up the clue that had been freshly opened out, he persuaded Sir Richard to seek for rest.

As soon as he was alone, Garth rang for Still, who, however, could only repeat what he had before said; and Garth was puzzled as to what fresh steps

to take, when the problem was solved by the man himself, who came, he said, to see if the gentleman was well enough to go now.

"He turned ill in the cab, did he not?" said Garth. "Yes, sir; would go in a cab he would," said the man. "I don't like 'em—ready to choke yer, they are; but he wouldn't come on a 'bus. 'Fore we'd gone far, he turns as white as his hanky, and shuts his eyes curious-like, and gets all abroad in his talk; but he manages to say, 'Take me back, and call again,' and I did as he said, and here I am."

"And what news have you?" said Garth.

The man looked curiously at him for a few minutes, and then rubbed the bridge of his nose with his rough hand, but—

"You see, sir, this is a matter o' offering rewards for some one as is missing, and I got a mate in this here job. For, you know, as soon as there's a notice up o' that sort, my mate and I begins to look out, so as to try if we can't find what's missing, and get what's offered. Now, I ask yer parding, sir, but I should like to know who you may be, and what you've got to do with the case. Suppose I leads you to it, shall we get the ready?"

"You may deal with me precisely as you would with the gentleman you saw before," said Garth. "You know—you found that yourself—he is too ill to leave the house."

"True for you, sir, I did see it; and as you seem to be a gent as is all right, let's go."

A cab was called, and, not without a glance at his unsavoury-looking companion, Garth followed him into the vehicle.

"Hadn't you better let me ride outside, sir," said the man, looking at the stuffed and padded interior with an aspect of disgust.

"No," said Garth; "I want to hear what you have to say respecting this affair."

The man took a tug at an imaginary forelock, and then waited, apparently to be questioned, while Garth took in his outward appearance at a glance.

He was rough and dirty enough to have passed for the veriest scamp in existence; but, all the same, he did not seem as if he belonged to that portion of society that has been dubbed the dangerous class. For there was a good open aspect to the browned face; and though the reddened nose told tales of drams taken, probably to keep out cold river mists, on either side a grey, frank eye looked you full in the face; while, greatest test of all, the fellow's palms were hard and horny, and ended by fingers that had been chipped and bruised and toughened by sheer labour.

"Well, sir, you see I aint got much to tell you, only that, seeing the reward up, my mate and me thought we might as well earn it as any one else. So we set to and—"

"You found him?" exclaimed Garth, eagerly.

"Well, sir, that's for you to say when you sees him. My mate generally sees people about these sorter things; but I came to-day, and a fine job I had to get to know where you lived; but I found out at last from a sarvant gal as lives close by. It don't do for us, you know, to go to no police—they 'umbugs a man about so, and I don't know now whether they aint been down on my mate—'cause,

you see, we didn't want to say nothing to them till as how you'd been and seen it."

Garth shuddered at that last word, "it." There was something so harsh, yet so expressive, in the one tiny syllable. It now, not him; and again he shuddered as he thought of the ordeal he had to go through.

He urged himself at last to ask a few questions as the cab drove on, the driver making his way over Waterloo Bridge to the Surrey side, so as to avoid the dense traffic of the Strand and Fleet-street; and as soon as they were in the comparative silence of the narrower streets, Garth learned that during the past night his companion had in his search been successful, and that what he had sought lay at that moment in a boat-house far down the Thames, in the low-lying district, where wharf and dock, and rickety stairs, or steamboat-pier, alternate with muddy pile and drain, with bank after bank of slimy mud, over which the water of the swift tide seems to glide and play here and there, washing it up into a foul, frothy scum, compounded of the poisons daily cast into the mighty stream.

CHAPTER XXXIX.—DOWN THE RIVER.

IT was a long ride, down deplorable-looking streets, where wretched tumble-down tenements, with frowning aspect, and filthy, patchy windows, were dominated by the lordly warehouse, with its great gallows-like crane at every floor—floors, five, six, seven and eight storeys from the ground, from whose open doors men stood gazing down as coolly as if they were on *terra firma*, though a moment's giddiness must have precipitated them into the street below.

Garth saw all this, in spite of the pre-occupation of his thoughts, as he tried to nerve himself for the task to come. Probably his brain was abnormally excited, and the pictures of the panorama passing the cab-window seemed to force themselves upon him. Now he was apparently interested in the places where the ship-chandlers hung out their wares; the next moment the gate of a dock, with its scores of labourers waiting for a job, took his attention. Low public-houses or beershops, with their lounging knots of customers, half labourer, half sailor or lighter-man, with the inevitable coarse, brazen, high-cheeked, muscular woman. A little farther on, and he was gazing at a clump of masts rising from behind high walls; then came comparatively decent dwellings, with a vast display of green paint and brass knockers to the doors of the most dazzling lustre. In nearly every parlour-window here a parrot of grey or gaudy hue could be seen swinging and climbing about. In front of one house a flagstaff was rigged up, with its halyards, vane, and pennant; and in front of another a small ship's cannon, and the chip-nosed fragment of a figure-head ornamented the lawn.

Maritime population, with maritime tastes; the houses of trading shippers, and mates of small vessels. Sea-chests could be met in cart or barrow at every turn, along with the big, bolster-like bag that forms the orthodox portmanteau containing the sailor's kit. Here and there he passed, in full "long-shore togs," the dwellers in the sea-savoured houses,

passing along the pavement with the true nautical roll, which told of sea legs brought ashore.

On still, with the rattle of the wretched cab and its jangling windows, seeming to form a tune that repeated itself for ever to his ears. The man from watching him had taken to drumming the top of the door with his hard fingers, blackened and stained with tar; while from time to time he thrust out his head to give some direction or another to the driver, whose interminable course seemed as if it would never end.

At last, though, the guide seemed to grow excited, giving his orders more frequently, with the result of the cab being driven in and out of rugged, tortuous lanes, from one of which it had to back out to give place to a waggon laden with ship's spars and cable. Narrow ways seemed the rule, and down these the cab went jolting, till the driver drew up short at the end of a wretched alley, where the guide dismounted.

"Can't get no farther with the cab now, sir," he said. "We must walk the rest on it."

Garth told the driver to wait; and then, in a dreamy, troubled state of mind, he followed his conductor in and out, by wharf and cranny, waterside buildings, where paths were wet and muddy, and the few people seen looked poverty-stricken and repulsive. Tall walls reached up here, to shut out the light from the low, damp dwellings; a few yards farther, and there was the din of iron, as rivets were driven into the sides of some iron vessel; and again a little farther, and they heard the incessant rap, rap, rap of the caulkers' hammers, as they drove in the tarry oakum between the seams of the wooden ship.

Iron-workers, black and grimy, painters, carpenters, rope-makers, all were busy here; steam, too, hissed, and roared, and shrieked, as it escaped some torturing engine in white wreaths. All forced itself upon Robert Garth's brain, as he followed his conductor to where there were loose stones and mud beneath his feet, the black rushing river on his left hand, and on his right slimy piles, black, and green, and brown, with the iron rings hanging from their sides all eaten and corroded away. There was a channel leading to some dock close by, and foul water was bubbling noisily through a pair of sluice-gates; and this, too, struck him, as the splashing noise fell upon his ear.

The next moment, though, all had passed away, but the one shudder-engendering idea of that which he had come to see; for a rough, harsh voice, proceeding from another amphibious-looking being, said—

"You've found some one, then?"

"Ah," was the reply from Garth's conductor.

And, making to the right, the young man found himself beside a low, damp, muddy shed.

CHAPTER XL.—WHAT THE RIVER HAD TO TELL.

GARTH felt his breath come thick and fast as he caught sight of the low shed by his side. It was a boat-house evidently, and was roughly built of the hole-filled planks torn from the side of some ship taken from the breaker's yard. The door was

secured with a huge rusty padlock, and the amphibious-looking man, introduced now as "my mate," had evidently been doing duty as sentry, seated upon a post, and smoking a long clay pipe, troubled not in the slightest degree that within a few feet—dripping, soddened, battered by contact with pier and pile—lay the nameless dead, separated from him only by that badly hung door facing the river, through whose cracks and treenail holes the interior could easily have been viewed.

The strongest of nerve might have shuddered as the man who had been keeping guard noisily unfastened the padlock, drew it out of the staple, and was about to throw open the door of the hovel, when Garth abruptly arrested him.

"Are you sure that this answers to the description given?" he said.

"Sure on it? Oh, yes, sir; that's right enough. You needn't go in wi'out you like. You may take our word for it; but, as soon as you're suddersfied, we must go and tell the pleece, or else there'll be a rare runipus. They won't like it, as it is, and 'll be wanting to go in for the re-ward; but we looks to you, sir, as a gentleman, to make all that right."

"I'll see justice done you," said Garth, still hesitating.

"Thanky, sir. You see, about them pleece—there's the inkwest, and the doctor, and the jury, and all of 'em to see it; but you may take our word for it as it's all right—it's him, sure enough."

"How—how do you suppose it happened—by accident?"

"Well, sir, it don't look werry accidental when a pore chap's got two knife-holes in his chest, and a cut across the head as has been enough to do for him. You may call it accident, if you like; but accidents don't turn a chap's pocket inside out, and take his watch and rings."

Garth glanced shudderingly at the door again—should he go in, or should he stay? It was cruel work; but he had promised the father, and the duty must be performed. He could not help dreading to gaze upon the fair, frank, handsome face that he knew of old, and, as he recalled it, with its insolent smile of triumph, when they parted at the station. And now barbarously mutilated, sullied with water and mud perhaps, it would be so changed as to be almost beyond power of recognition.

And yet he knew that it must be done—that it was impossible that he could take the man's judgment, which must be of the most partial character.

There was nothing else for it, then, but to go; and he motioned to the man to open the rude door.

"I don't know as I'd go, sir, if I was you," said the one who had been his conductor. "Give it up, sir, and take our word for it; we're used to this sorter thing, but 'tain't pleasant to look at. I wouldn't go in, sir, if I was you."

The man became so importunate at last that he angered Garth, who had now nerved himself for his task; and without waiting to hear more, he muttered the two words, "Poor Lionel!" threw open the door, and strode in.

Almost as soon as he had crossed the threshold the door swung to behind him, leaving him in semi-darkness, the place only being illumined by the faint

pencils of light that streamed in through the treenail holes in the old planks.

But there was light enough to show Garth that he was standing in a long, low shed, whose floor was of muddy shingle stones, with a plank laid down the centre, worn and furrowed by long usage, and the coursing to and fro upon it of the iron keel of some boat. A few broken oars and a small skiff's mast leaned up against the side, in company with a boat-hook and a rude pole. Upon a peg hard by was a coil of rope and a grapnel; and, again, in other parts, coils of rope, and four fluked, sharp-pointed grapnels, which made the visitor shudder as he thought of their purpose. Pieces of old iron, fragments of chain, scraps of rope, a rugged old ship's fender, and some pieces of drift wood—muddy, sodden, and jagged with old red corroded nails—were all that remained to take his attention, as his eyes wandered round the place, studiously avoiding, and leaving to the last, that which he had expressly come to see.

Oars, boat-hook, mast, cordage—they were all there; but where was the sail? It was not in the boat outside—that he had seen when outside with the men. Where, then, was the sail?

Garth found that it was, as it were, one portion of his mind set in array against the other portion asking that question—one that he knew the answer to well enough, though he had not seen the sail, could not see it now, as he stood gazing upon the faint rays streaming down from between the ill-fitting and loose tiles of the roof, falling here straight, there aslant, but all to cross and form a curious network of light, with the rays pouring in from the sides.

He told himself that he was a coward; but the defensive part of his intellect whispered in return that, had this been the body of a stranger lying at his feet, he could have calmly and sadly gazed upon the dead. But it was the dread of looking upon his friend—upon the man whom of late, but for a hard battle with self, he could have called his enemy—to look upon him cut down in the flower of his youth, and by some dreadful death, in the hour of some wild freak, perhaps dissipation.

Garth paused, and he repeated those words—

"Had it been the body of a stranger."

Then, as if a flash of light had illumined the meaning of those words, he started, "Had it been the body of a stranger." Why, after all, might it not be the earthly clay of some one unknown? It would be horrible still; but if he could bear back the tidings to that stricken old man that Lionel might still live—that this was not he—how he could fervently say "Thank Heaven!"

He stepped forward to where an old patched sail lay covering something in a pool of mud and water. The sailcloth was stained and dabbled with the mud, and a strange sense of shrinking seized upon Garth as he stooped to lift one end.

He knew which to lift, for through the bare old cloth the human form could plainly be distinguished. It was not much to do—to raise that cloth at the end for a brief moment. He could recognize him in an instant, and nerving himself once more, he stooped hastily, raised the cover and dropped it again, to mutter—nay, to exclaim loudly, with a fervour of

tone that bespoke the intensity of the speaker's feelings—

"Thank God!"

Garth turned away hastily, and forced open the door, to admit the light of day, and to confront the bearer of tidings and his mate; for his glance had been but a momentary one. He had stood at the back as he raised the sail, and in that moment's glance he had seen—no horrors, none of the distortions sometimes left by a fearful death—he had seen but one thing, and that was—

The man's hair was black!

CHAPTER XLI.—RIVER-SHORE HOPES.

GARTH hurriedly made his way back to the chambers, where he found Sir Richard hastily walking up and down the room.

"Ah, you are back!" he said, impatiently. "I fell asleep for quite two hours, and then I should have come after you, only the address the man gave had quite glided from my memory. It seems, Garth, as if my head were so full of this one trouble that it will hold nothing else. But what news?"

"None, sir," said Garth, quietly. "It was, thank Heaven, a mistake."

"I don't know, Garth, I don't know; this suspense is almost more agonizing than the knowledge that my poor boy had really been found dead. I feel at times that I cannot bear it much longer. You saw this—this—"

"Yes, sir; I saw the body of some poor creature lying in a boat-shed; but it was not the one we seek."

"Are you sure? You were not mistaken? You really did look to make sure?"

Garth smiled faintly as he thought of his irresolution, and the way in which he had held back; and then he answered, calmly—

"Yes, Sir Richard; I made perfectly sure."

It was pitiful to see the old man's trouble—the constant agitation, the anxious gaze, the nervous restless motion of his hands, as he turned over some communication, some letter professing to give information respecting a young man in some far-off part of England or Wales—every despatch exciting hopes that were soon found to be perfectly baseless.

At length, after much persuasion, Sir Richard agreed to lie down, on the condition that Garth would stay, ready to answer any communication that might arrive.

"You know, my dear boy, these things always will arrive when we are absent," he said, pitifully.

"Trust me, Sir Richard," was the reply; "I am indeed doing everything possible to make a discovery."

The old man did not trust himself to speak, but, wringing Garth's hand, he despairingly left the room.

In the meantime, Garth's sudden departure from before the boat-shed far down on the muddy banks of the Thames had not been allowed to pass uncanvassed by the two rough men, the seekers for such ghastly waifs and strays.

"Suvrin," said the one who had acted as guide, in answer to a query.

"Air you sure as there warn't two?"

"I am," said the other, with a wave of his pipe-stem. "Why, if there'd been two, wouldn't you a

heard 'em chink when he stuffed 'em in my hand?" said Sam, not at all relying upon the integrity of his known character for a refutation of this sidewise charge that he had kept back a portion of the reward. "Theer's what he give me," he continued, holding out a sovereign in his horny palm; "and we'll get it changed as soon as you like."

"Yes," said the other, speaking indistinctly, on account of the pipe between his lips—"we'll get it changed afore we go on to the station."

As he spoke, he carefully chained and padlocked the door of the shed, smoking coolly enough the while.

"I aint seen anything else up—no notice, nor nothing," said Sam; "and we mustn't wait no longer before giving information, or there'll be a row."

"No, there aint nothing up," said the other, pocketing his key, and removing his pipe to expectorate. "I've been looking, and there's on'y a bill up about a woman. He was precious pertickler: why wouldn't this one do? All they wanted was some one to give a decent Christun berrying to; and this here pore chap would ha' done as well as any other one to ease their minds with."

"But, you see, he's got black hair; and on the bill it says fair, curly hair," said Sam. "I was half afraid it wouldn't do."

"Yah! what does the colour of the hair matter?" grumbled the other. "I mean to say it's reg'larly swindling us out of two 'undered pound. He'd ha' done as well as any other, and they might have had their inkwist, and sat on him, and sworn to him, and said he was found drowned, and there'd ha' been a comfortable feeling, and they needn't ha' troubled themselves no more."

"Well, let's go and give notice, and then we'll change this here, and have a wet—eh, lad?"

"Ah, may as well," said the other, removing his pipe, to draw an anticipatory hand across his mouth. "Let's see—tall and fair; curly hair, eh, Sam? Well, perhaps something may turn up yet—time enough for us. That 'ere would have done, safe enough, if his hair had been right colour. Better luck next time—eh, lad?"

"Ah, dessay," said Sam, forcing the sovereign right to the bottom of his pocket. "Two 'undered pound reward! We ought to have had it, old man; but who knows but what something mayn't turn up yet?"

CHAPTER XLII.—JANET'S SEARCH.

THERE was far from being peace in the house of Wragg; for the place had gained a most unenviable notoriety. Wrong-doings were prevalent enough in the Dials; but they were ordinary wrong-doings, and those who were guilty of peculiar acts were, as a rule, patted on the back by the fraternity. In fact, if 'Arry Burge, or Tom Gagan, or Micky Green were taken for a burglary, or a robbery with violence, there was always a large following of admiring companions to see them off to the station, to be present at their hearing, and to give them a cheer during their handcuffed walk to the black van. They had no such great objection to a murder; and more than once a good hundred of neighbours had waited all night outside Newgate to see Bob, or Ben, or Joe die game at eight o'clock in the morning.

But this mysterious disappearance work was something not to be tolerated; there was too much of the Burke and Hare and body-snatching about it; and consequently the name of Wragg stank in the nostrils of the clean-handed dwellers in the Dials, and the house in Brownjohn-street enjoyed, in consequence, but little peace.

D. Wragg could not show himself outside; and as for Canau, he had been mobbed twice, to return storming and angry, ready to threaten all sorts of vengeance upon his persecutors, foremost amongst whom was Mr. John Screwby.

This gentleman seemed to have devoted himself, heart and soul, to the task of keeping alive in the Seven Dials' mind the fact that Lionel Ambley had been seen to go into the Brownjohn-street house, and had not been seen to come out; though all this rested on Mr. Screwby's assertion, since he brought no corroborative evidence to bear—only spoke of the matter right and left, even haranguing excited mobs, who needed but little leading to have made them wreck D. Wragg's, and administer Lynch law to its inhabitants.

In fact, instead of the matter being a nine days' wonder, and then passing off, interest in the mystery seemed to be ever on the increase; and a feeling of dread more than once seized the girls, lest some terrible evil should befall them.

"I tell you what it is, young fellow," said P. C. Brace one evening to Mr. John Screwby, whom he had warned to move on, just at a time when he was haranguing a pack of boys—"I tell you what it is, young fellow, if you get opening your mouth so wide about all this here, people will begin to think as you know as much about it as any one else."

Mr. John Screwby's jaw fell, and he stood gazing speechlessly at the policeman, as that worthy wagged his head expressively to indicate the words "Move on!" and that without uttering another syllable. On he moved, rubbing his jaw with one hand, pulling his cap a little over his ears, and in various ways acting as if not quite at peace within himself.

It was impossible for those within the house not to observe how they were looked upon by their neighbours: the trade of the shop had dropped off day by day, till there was absolutely nothing doing, although D. Wragg sat hour after hour smoking his pipe behind the counter, and muttering to himself.

It was upon Linny and Janet, though, that much of the burden fell. They were compelled to keep themselves close prisoners within the house, lest they should encounter some insult upon going out; and the atmosphere of suspicion that surrounded the house gradually seemed to penetrate, like some dim mist, till it filled the place; and a strange feeling of constraint sprang up, causing coldness between the girls, and doubt in those with whom they dwelt.

Even Mrs. Winks looked troubled and scared, coming up one morning from the cellar kitchen, with her curl-papers all limp, to declare, in confidence, to Linny that she "dursen't go down no more, for she had heard a noise;" and then, in a very low whisper, she declared her conviction that there was something wrong.

This was soon after daybreak one washing-day;

and afterwards Mrs. Winks declared in favour of the central portions of the house, refusing absolutely either to ascend to the attics or to descend to the basement.

"But is it not foolish?" said Janet to her one day; "what can there be upstairs or downstairs to hurt you?"

"There, don't ask me, child," exclaimed Mrs. Winks—"I don't know; I only know what I think. There's something wrong about the place, and you can feel it in the air; and if it wasn't for you children I wouldn't stop another day—see if I would."

Janet turned from her with a strange, troubled look, to gaze now at Linny, who seemed pale and ready to burst into tears; but, if she had intended to speak, she restrained herself, and took a seat at the other end of the room.

The day passed in a cheerless, dreary way, but not quite in peace, for more than once a rude shout or laugh made the girls to start from their seats, and stand trembling for what might be to come. But the demonstrations proved to be harmless, and no more offensive than they could be made by words or the hurling into the shop of a few stones and a broken ginger-beer bottle, to the occasioning of a vast amount of fluttering amongst the birds and a fierce yelping of the imprisoned dogs.

Once or twice Janet glanced at Linny, as if to speak; but it was only to see her bent of head and tearful, and so the words remained unspoken.

The night came at last, and the girls said their good nights in a strange, constrained manner, although it might have been imagined that each had some confidence to make to the other. D. Wragg was heard stumping and jerking about the house, as if busy examining all fastenings and putting out the gas, and then there was a knock at the outer door—a well-known tap—to which Janet hastened to reply, and admitted Canau, just as Linny was passing up the stairs.

Monsieur Canau entered sideways, with the door only opened a few inches, and then closed it hastily, as if in dread of pursuit, when he stood looking at Janet, and wiping the perspiration from his forehead with an old silk handkerchief.

"Is there any news?" he faltered, looking hard at the deformed girl the while.

"No," she cried, hoarsely—"there is no news."

D. Wragg opened the back-room door at this moment, to glance out hastily, when, seeing who it was, he reclosed the door, and waited till his lodgers had gone hastily upstairs, when his head once more appeared like that of a rat from its hole, and he listened till all was still before reclosing his door.

Silence fell upon the house at last—not, though, that its inmates were at rest, for Canau lay for long enough sleepless, and twisting over thought after thought. D. Wragg, too, was rather uneasy that night; while to Linny the hours dragged heavily on.

It must have been about two o'clock when there was a faint, grating noise at the lock of Janet's room, the door opened softly and almost without a sound, and then, with her dress rustling slightly against the jambs, Janet glided out on the landing, and stood in the darkness listening.

There was an occasional shout from some distant

street, or a heavy, staggering footfall at intervals—otherwise all was still; while inside the house, save the heavy "beat, beat" of her own heart, not a sound was to be heard.

She stood for quite ten minutes, and then glided more than walked up to the attic landing, where she leaned over the banisters, and again listened for some considerable time before crossing to the door; and then, pressing upon the panel, the wretched door slowly opened, but with a loud, creaking sound, which made her hurry back to the banisters, and lean over, with one hand pressed upon her heart.

"Nothing—they did not hear it," she whispered softly to herself, after a due amount of cautious waiting, when she glided softly back, passed into the attic, and stood a moment waiting.

Should she close the door?

It would be better, she thought; and one hand was laid upon it, but it gave forth another dismal creak at the first touch, and her hand fell to her side, the beating at her heart increased in violence as she again hurried out, for this time there was unmistakably a noise, and she stood tremblingly anxious, expecting each moment to see Canau's or Mrs. Winks's door open, and a stream of light to break forth upon the darkness—perhaps even from far below to see D. Wragg's sharp, peering face, lit up by the flickering glim he carried.

But no; all remained absolutely still, and muttering softly, "In the next house—in the next house," she returned, entered the attic; and this time, without attempting to close the door, walked across to the back window, and drew back a piece of old print which served as a blind.

The little extra light shed into the room by this act gave her but little help as she cautiously went from side to side, straining her eyes to ascertain what was in the attic; and by degrees she made out that the great flat hamper and the cork sacks were gone, and also that there was not one of the dogs left to greet her with a whine.

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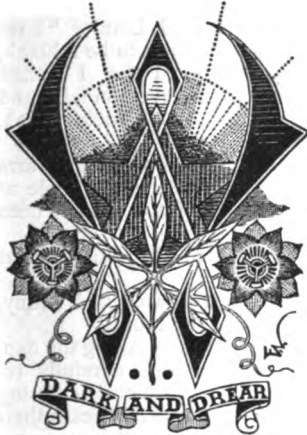
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CHAPTER LXIII.—D. WRAGG'S SAFE.



WHILE the absence of the dogs was an advantage in some respects, as their noise might have roused up those below, yet, all the same, Janet would have been glad if one of the poor dumb beasts had been present to relieve the strange,

weird silence of the house—to have given her its companionship, and she shuddered slightly as she stepped out on to the landing, listened once more, and then returned to kneel down in one corner; when, taking a box of matches from her pocket, she struck one upon the wall, but only to leave there a long line of soft, lambent light, which seemed to fade away in mist, and then to return again and again.

Another match, with a similar result, and another, and yet another; but her hands were wet with perspiration, and the moisture prevented them from igniting.

"The last," muttered Janet, softly, as she took another tiny splint from her box, struck it carefully, and was this time successful, for a light flashed out, burned with the peculiar soft sputtering noise of sulphur for a few moments, and then the little splint blazed for long enough to enable her to light a scrap of candle which she held in her hand, and then she stood holding it above her head, peering in all directions as the light shone more brightly; till, apparently satisfied that she was quite alone, she stepped to one side of the back portion of the attic, which side was represented by a piece of blank plaster wall, some six feet long between outer wall and chimney, while for height it was not above four feet from the sloping roof.

Janet was evidently at home here; but she paused for a few moments, trembling violently, before setting the scrap of candle upon the little hearthstone, stooping down, and inserting her fingers in the crevice between skirting-board and floor.

But now, again, her heart seemed to fail her, and she stayed in the same attitude for some moments, trying to recover her nerve, when, with an effort, she drew the board towards her, and the whole of the side, hinged apparently at the top, drew out, leaving an opening, as she raised it higher and higher, into what seemed to be another attic.

It was but a momentary glance, though, for a faint

noise caused her to loosen her hold, and the great flap fell back into its place without noise, but causing such a current of air to be dispersed that the scrap of candle was extinguished, and Janet stood listening in the dark.

"I am a greater coward than I thought for," she muttered, angrily, as she stooped and picked up the candle, replaced it in her pocket, and then, with a resolution that could hardly have been expected, she placed her fingers once more beneath the skirting-board, easily raised the flap, hesitated a moment, and then passed under it, to stand—as she lowered it behind her—in utter darkness, listening; but there was no sound, her eyes strained to pierce the gloom; her hands outstretched, as if to keep back danger—a very statue—till, by an effort, she began to search about in what seemed to be little better than a closet.

There was a strange odour in the place that made her shudder; and something seemed, now she had entered, to be dragging at her, and warning her to flee; but she nerved herself, battled with her imagination, and—ready to encounter the worst—she searched on.

But not for many moments; for suddenly it seemed to Janet that all the blood in her body had rushed to her heart, that all she had dreaded was true, and that now all she had dared for his sake had indeed brought her to the end, and that she might now lie down and die; for, as she had cautiously searched along, one hand had been laid upon another, and that other hand was cold and damp.

CHAPTER XLIV.—WHAT JANET FOUND.

DARKNESS, and the grosser darkness of horror, oppressed Janet, as she involuntarily sank upon her knees, trembling from head to foot, her mouth and throat dry, and a strong desire upon her to shriek; but no sound passed her lips, as she bent down lower and lower, till her forehead touched that cold hand, and a sob tore itself from her breast.

For she was not surprised. She had come to find him, expecting that he would be here, in the hiding-place to which she had traced D. Wragg; but the horror was more than she could bear, and for a time she seemed to be chained to where she knelt, consciousness almost leaving her.

But Janet had been nerving herself to this task for days—forcing herself on, and striving hard to cast aside all womanly fears; and, as she recalled by slow degrees all that she had promised herself, she fought hard to take a more philosophical view of the position. She asked herself what was there to fear in that cold, inanimate hand she was touching; and feelings of rage and anger came to her relief—relief, for they chased away the slavish fears that troubled her.

She had suspected this—she had long known it; but what could she do? "Whose cruel, murderous act was it?" she asked herself. If it was D. Wragg alone, she would denounce him at once—she would not spare him, even for Linny's sake. But was it D. Wragg alone?

She trembled and shuddered, and then wept piteously, as she recalled the words of Canau and his long, close conversations with D. Wragg. She

could not tell: they might have meant anything; but still they seemed to point towards the disappearance of Lionel Ambley. And at last she told herself that she dared not speak—that she dared not denounce D. Wragg—that she should injure him who had been to her more than parent, and who still lavished upon her more than a father's love; but then this hand—this cold, damp hand, against which her forehead rested! How her heart bled, as there, in the solitude of that dark hiding-place, whose terrors now seemed to have fled, she wept—the tears streaming from her eyes until they were hot and dry, and the sobs of anguish still tearing from her breast.

Fear? No, she felt no fear now; it was love—the ardent love of her poor broken heart. Fear him? No; why should she? And she covered the hand with kisses, held it to her throbbing bosom, and then threw herself down, to lay it against her cheek, as she moaned bitterly in her great anguish.

What was there for her now, she thought, but to die? What had she to live for? Was it not better so? Had he lived, he would have scorned her—would never once have smiled upon her. She would never have dared to lay that hand to her cheek—to approach him; but now he was dead, she might touch him—might kiss his hands—his feet—for was he not her king, the monarch of her heart—a true gem, though hidden by so coarse a setting!

Would it be wrong, she asked herself—would it be an insult to him, sacred now in death—if she raised his head; that head with the white smooth brow, clear as a woman's, and round which clustered those crisp, fair curls? Would it be profaning the dead if she raised that head, to rest it upon her breast, to hold it there till she died? For she told herself that she would die, that her heart was broken, and she could not live. No; he would forgive her, perhaps, if they met—for he would know then how she had loved him; and besides, had she not been taught that after death they were changed? She would not take with her into the future that crushed, deformed casket of the sacred fire that burned for ever; but he might see her, as she felt that her heart was not as her body.

Again she moaned in her anguish as she clung to that hand, heedless of how time might be passing; till, frantic with grief, she rose to her knees and bent down.

Loathsome? No; how could he be loathsome to her? Had he lived, he might have looked upon her with loathing; but to be near him even now—it was life to her, though she wished not to live; and yet, as she sought him after learning the secret of this place, she had felt fear.

But there was no fear now, as she bent softly down to lay her hand upon the face; but only to start back, and press both those hands to her lips, lest she should shriek aloud. For what did it mean? the face was warm and soft, and breath had been wafted across her extended palm.

"What did it mean?" she asked herself again; and then a flash of light darted through her brain as a faint sigh was heard.

"Linny!" she ejaculated in a loud whisper; and again, "Linny, Linny!"

"Janet," was the reply, in faint tones; and then quickly after, "Where is the light? What does this mean? Where am I?"

"Hush! speak lower," said Janet, hoarsely, her nerves thrilling the while with excitement. "How came you here?"

"I know—I know now!" sobbed Linny. "I remember now; for all seemed to me to be a blank, and I suppose I was so frightened that I fainted away. Take me to my room, Jenny; I'm faint and ill, and that deathly sickness is coming back. Don't, don't leave me!"

Janet held her hands, and then passed an arm round the shivering form, wondering the while at her own madness, and thinking of how she had been deceived.

"But you have not told me," she whispered at last, to break the silence.

"No, not here. Let us go down," said Linny, shuddering. "Come down to my room."

Without a word, Janet rose, and, pushing the flap, it yielded, and they passed through, carefully replacing it as it was before, when, cautiously crossing the worm-eaten boards, which cracked beneath their weight, the door was drawn to, and five minutes after they were in Linny's room, where the poor girl's first act was to relieve herself with a hearty cry.

She grew calmer, though, at last, and ready to answer Janet's questions. The latter, too, had gained a victory over the raging tempest in her breast, and was eager to listen to the other's words.

"I saw him go up there twice," whispered Linny; "and once when he had gone in I followed, and there was no one there. I knew there must be another place then, and I found it at last, and to-night I went to see if any clue might be there; for I have had horrible feelings about it all, Janet, and I had to try very hard before I dared to go. I cannot tell you what I thought, but I felt that I must go—that something was dragging me there—and at last I went, and had only just closed the door when I heard footsteps—"

"Yes, mine," said Janet, softly.

"I hurried to the wall," said Linny, "not knowing hardly what I did in my fear; and if it had not been for trying to hide myself, lest I should be found out, I should never, after all, have dared to go where I did. But still, hearing that some one was coming, and that there was a hand upon the door, I dragged at the opening, crept in, and it closed behind me, when, to add to all that frightened me, I suddenly remembered that whoever was coming must be coming to the same place. I can't tell you any more, Jenny, only that my head swam, and that a horrible feeling of things passing away came upon me; and I suppose I fell."

They sat till morning dawned, Janet musing upon how she had heard the sound of Linny's fall, and attributed it to something in the next house; then, upon the strangeness of their both choosing the same time and discovering the same things; and lastly, upon the mystery itself, and whether those in the house had had anything to do with the young man's disappearance. At last she spoke.

"Linny," she whispered, "would it not have been better if you had had confidence in me—if you had

trusted me, and told me all your thoughts, and what you meant to do?"

In a moment, Linny had glided from her chair, and was kneeling with her arms clasped tightly round Janet's waist.

"Yes, yes—I know," she whispered, "I ought. And I would have told you, dear; but I dared not. I was afraid to tell you, Jenny; and you have shrunk from me, and been suspicious of me, as if I knew things, and I don't. Mind, I'm not cross, dear, for I felt the same about you; and I wanted to say things to comfort you, but I was afraid. I did not know how, for you've been so changed lately, Jenny."

"Changed? Yes," said Janet, tenderly kissing the white forehead so near her lips, "I am changed—I know it; for this suspense is horrible. But, tell me, Linny, do you know anything—you would not deceive me?"

"No, indeed!" was the reply; "but I know nothing, darling, only I wanted to try and find out, for perhaps it's very cruel and wrong. But I can't help thinking that some one here knows, and I am afraid. I thought that if I could find out for certain, I might try and beg them to set that poor old man at rest; for I'm dreaming of him always, Janet, and it troubles me."

"Not of his son," exclaimed Janet, fiercely; but only to turn it off with a laugh.

"No," said Linny, immediately; "I do not dream of him. I only think of him, and how terrible it must be for his poor father."

"Hush!" said Janet, hoarsely; "I cannot bear to talk about it now. Let me lie down by your side for a few hours. See, it is nearly day."

Half one of those hours had not passed before the two girls were, in spite of their agitation, sleeping soundly; and ere another had been marked off on the old Dutch clock in the back room, D. Wragg was astir, to gently draw up his blind and inspect the morning—a proceeding that did not seem to prove highly satisfactory, for he groaned more than sighed, shook his head, jerked about as he crossed the room, and then, without his boots, he stepped into the passage, and began to climb the stairs—pausing, though, upon each landing, to listen whether any one else was stirring.

But, as far as he could judge, every one was sunk in that sound slumber of early morn, Mrs. Winks loudly announcing her state as he passed her door.

There seemed to be a great deal of indecision, though, in D. Wragg's movements. His haltings were many, and the cautious manner in which he peered about seemed to indicate that the errand upon which he was bound was one of no trivial import.

At last, though, following precisely the same course as Janet had taken in the dark, he climbed to the top, stood listening for a while, and then entered the attic, closing the door carefully behind him, but, apparently, taking no steps to make it fast.

D. Wragg had not been out of sight five minutes before there was the soft grating noise of a key turning in the wards of a lock; then there was a loud crack, and a door below opened to give exit to Monsieur Canau, who stood in the doorway listening for

a while, and then, shoes in hand, he descended softly and swiftly to the bottom of the house, right into the cellar kitchen, where, after unbolting a door, he lit a candle, passed under the area grating with his pinched old hat held lantern-wise over the candle, and then, drawing open a wretched old door, he passed rapidly into a large cellar, in one corner of which was the small stock of coals in use for the house, in another the ashes and refuse.

But Monsieur Canau had hardly a look for these. He merely glanced round the place, and then drew back the fastening of the inner cellar, one which seemed to go far beneath the road.

His candle flickered here, and burned dimly for a few moments, as he walked backwards and forwards in the cobwebbed, vaulted place, holding his candle low down, and examining the reeking floor, particularly in one spot—the farthest corner from the door. This he scraped a little with his hands, then stamped upon several times, held the candle down to see what impression his feet had made; and then, taking up a rough piece of wood, he carefully drew it backwards and forwards over where he had stamped, and, lastly, extinguished his candle, closed the cellar-doors, crossed the area, and after leaving all below as he had found it, hurried upstairs once more—but, in spite of his years, with the activity of a boy.

He stopped by his own room, entered it for a few moments, and then softly reappeared, to step up to the attic landing, where he again paused to listen attentively for fully five minutes; but, though Mrs. Winks was as stertorous as ever in her breathing, not another sound was to be heard in the house; and, laying his hand upon the attic latch, Canau raised it very softly, not the eighth of an inch at a time—coaxing the door, as it were, to open without noise, till, by slow degrees, he had pressed it back sufficiently far to allow the passage of his head, when, cautiously inserting it to peer round, the door was pressed back upon his neck, holding it between the edge and the door-jamb; while within a few inches, and gazing defiantly right into his eyes, he found himself face to face with D. Wragg.

CHAPTER XLV.—A REVELATION.

"NO news," day after day—day after day—till Garth was tired of repeating the words to the troubled father. Sergeant Prout came often enough to repeat his story that, so far, he had done everything possible; but that he had something on the way that he thought must turn out right.

At last, one evening, Garth was wandering towards the Dials: he knew not why, he said, but it always appeared to him that the elucidation of the mystery must come from that direction; and, though he would not own to it, he made this surmise the excuse for going, day after day, to Brownjohn-street, seeing Linny but seldom—Canau often, quite a friendship having arisen between this strangely-assorted couple.

Garth had wandered thoughtfully on, till, nearing the end of St. Martin's-lane, he started; for from a busy street came a sharp rattling of wheels, a shout, a dull, heavy sound; and then there was a rush of people, and a large crowd had collected.

"There, that's the secun' acciden' I've seen at that there corner with my own blessed eyes," said a man. "Them cabs comes a-cutting along fierce, never thinking as they're got anything to do but shout, and everybody's to get out of their way in a hinstant. It ought to be put a stop to—that it ought!"

There was an indignant chorus of acquiescent growls, though no one said what ought to be stopped; and Robert Garth pressed forward through the swaying crowd, in the midst of which the shiny crown of a policeman's hat could be seen.

"Get a stretcher—take him to the hospital—poor creature!" exclaimed different voices; and then came a score of indignant commands. "Give him air—stand back, will you!"

"Why don't you look alive, and take him to the hospital?" exclaimed a student's voice again.

"*Non—non! chez moi—chez moi!*" groaned the sufferer.

"What's he say? He's foreign. Any one here understand him? Any one know who he is?"

"I do," said Garth, pushing forward. "He wishes to be taken home," just as, half insensible, the sufferer babbled forth a few words again in his native tongue, to which he seemed naturally to revert.

And then, under the young man's guidance, poor Canau was borne to his lodgings, and a surgeon fetched, who came the more willingly upon Garth giving him his address, and an understanding to defray all expense—ill as he could afford it.

"I did try to avoid it; but I was confused, and stumbled. And, ah! *ma belle patrie!*" murmured Canau, "I shall see you no more."

For the surgeon had made his examination, bandaged and done all possible to ease the sufferer, and then taken his departure.

"I am hurt—much hurt," he said, feebly, reaching out a withered hand to Garth; "but I should like just once"—his eyes were turned towards a violin upon the wall; but when Janet eagerly reached it down, and he tried to raise the bow, his bandaged, bruised muscles refused to act, and he shook his head.

"Go you—go both," he said to the two girls, who, silent and tearful, stood by his side; "I want to speak to Wragg."

Linny led Janet, sobbing, away; and the bird-dealer sat by the wounded man's head.

"You told me," he said, shaking with pain, "you told me that she—she who has just gone—is not your own child, though you brought her up. How is that? From whence did you have her? I don't want to talk about upstairs yet."

D. Wragg looked in a puzzled way at his lodger, and then at Garth, before answering.

"Who wants to know, and what for?" he jerked out, at length.

"I do—I do—tell me; for the nature of which you talk so much whispers me that, after all these many years that I have taught and loved her, she is my own child—my own little one; and if—if I am to pass away, I should like one—one more spark of happiness first, by knowing that she was saved."

D. Wragg, who had been drinking pretty freely, to soothe his mental perturbation, merely nodded his

head a few times, looked very wise and reticent, and then exclaimed—

"Never mind!"

"Had you not better try and sleep?" said Garth to the injured man, who seemed momentarily to grow more excited.

"Sleep!" he exclaimed, hoarsely—"sleep now? Shall I not soon sleep without waking? No, no, no, no!" he cried, excitedly; "let me be busy, and not waste these last moments, as I have so much of my life. Look here, you—you are a gentleman—you have feelings. Listen to me, and I will tell you. Years ago, nearly twenty now, I fled from my country. I was sought for—I was called traitor; but why? *Mon Dieu!* why? Because I loved my rightful monarch, and would have seen him upon the throne; but might is right, even as you say it here. And perhaps for my life, perhaps only from a long imprisonment, I escaped with my wife, and we came here to this England, where I knew that we should be safe. We had little money; but we had friends, and we became exiles, living poorly on the things we sold; while I tried for pupils in French, Italian, or La Musique. But what will you? There were hundreds of my compatriots here; and you English were generous, but we were many. I weary you, though—my story is long. We went from poor lodgings to poorer lodgings, till Carline told me she could go no farther; and we stayed not far from here—Soho-square—in an apartment high up, where a little one was born to share our misfortune—born to ask our smiles when we were sunk in misery. I tried then to give lessons—I spent my last shilling in advertisements; but nothing came. One day I went out with my violin, and I played here and I played there, that I might get pence, but without success; till I played at last to a set of boors, and they gave me money, and made me drink, first one and then another, till, weak and faint with long fasting, the vile drinks maddened me, so that I rush here and there. I cannot tell you all my troubles—I dare not—they were horrible. I made myself enemies, and I was seized here in England, and imprisoned, even as I had been imprisoned in France; and while I was then in prison, an enemy stole away from me all that was dear—all that I loved—all that had helped to make my life bearable. Monsieur, I was mad—I was frantic. I would have thrown away my life, I would have died at once. But no; I said that I ought to have revenge upon my enemies, who stole my reputation and my happiness. To live, I played, when I had bought back my instrument; going from low house to low house, and eagerly seizing the few pence they gave me, to drink and drown the misery that tore my heart. Sir, I was a gentleman, and see—see now what I have been all these long years! I should have fought with fortune, and not have let myself sink down—down to the dogs. But even there, there was goodness—goodness here, even in these wretched streets. See that poor deformed girl, how she loves me! and little Linny—P'tite Reine, as we call her—they have saved me, perhaps, from worse!"

Worn out, and half delirious with his injuries, the little Frenchman at last dropped into a doze, when Garth rose to leave, stepping softly from the room,

to give place to Janet, who thanked him for his kindness, and then lighted him down the stairs. But Linny was invisible.

However, D. Wragg, pipe in hand, made his appearance as Garth reached the passage, craning his neck, and thrusting his face forward in disagreeable proximity to his visitor's, as, in answer to Garth's "Good night," he exclaimed—

"I know."

"Know what?" said Garth, sharply, his thoughts instantly reverting to Lionel, and the hope that, in his state of semi-intoxication, D. Wragg might divulge some secret—some clue to the mystery that had so long troubled them. But if D. Wragg possessed a secret, it seemed to be one that he had no hasty desire to part from; for, with drunken solemnity, he merely shook his head a great many times, and then drew softly back into his shop, closing the door after him; but only to open it again for a few inches, so as to allow of the passage of his head, as he muttered, gruffly—throwing the words, as it were, at his visitor—

"Never mind!"

CHAPTER XLVI.—HOPE DEFERRED.

"**B**EEN here five minutes, sir," said Sergeant Prout, as Garth entered the passage of the Regent-street house. "Yes, five minutes exactly," he continued, referring to his watch. "I had allowed myself ten minutes to wait and see if Sir Richard woke up; and if he had not woke up at the end of that time, I was off. But as you've come, that'll do as well."

"What news have you, then?" said Garth.

"Well, I don't know that I have any as yet, sir."

Garth gave a gesture of impatience.

"Slow and sure, sir, 's my motto," said the sergeant. "It aint always that one can make a dead swoop down. I should like to have brought you word that I had found next day after getting instructions, but a case of this sort is like hatching chickens—it takes time. You've been thinking that the eggs are all addled; but, perhaps, you are wrong, sir. I don't know that I didn't hear one little thing beginning to peck inside; and one may have a brood yet, who knows?"

"Have you anything authentic to tell me?" said Garth, who was wearied out with the many visits of the police, the endless consultations, the trivial information demanded, and, after all, the little they had done.

"Nothing at all, sir, as yet; only I tell you that I think that I shall have something for you directly."

"Hope deferred," said Garth, bitterly.

"Maketh the heart sick, eh, sir? Exactly so; and good news is the physic that makes it well again. Have a little more patience with me, and you may be satisfied yet."

Garth bent his head, and the sergeant took his departure; when, upon going upstairs, Sir Richard was still fast asleep, evidently under the influence of some sedative medicine, for there was a graduated bottle upon the little table by the head of his couch, and a faint odour, that reminded Garth of visits to photographers', pervaded the room.

"Must be ether," he muttered, going on tip-toe to the bedside, and anxiously looking down in the pallid, troubled face, whose expression—even in sleep—told of the tortured mind, and the pangs the old man was called upon to suffer. Here, within the short space of an hour, had Garth been called upon to stand beside two couches—that of the poor and that of the rich; and he could not help reflecting upon the contrast, and how much more terrible were the effects of mental than bodily pain; for Sir Richard Ambley, with every luxury around him, and no bodily ailment, was worn down by anxiety into the shadow of his former self.

"I will not awake him," said Garth, to himself; and he stole softly from the room, to sit and think for a while.

The hour being yet too early for bed, he lit a cigar, and went into the street for half an hour's stroll before retiring for the night.

"I wonder if we shall ever see him again," thought Garth, as he turned down one of the quiet streets, intending to make a circuit and return to the chambers by another route.

The street was perfectly empty, the long line of lamps looking in the distance like a vista of golden beads hung in the air; but he altered his mind on the instant, just as he became aware of a light step close behind him—so close that he even heard a heavy, laboured breathing, and, turning sharply, he was face to face with, and so close as to be even touching, his follower, who, with one arm upraised, appeared to have been about to hug him by the neck, the light falling full upon the features of Mr. John Screwby.

CHAPTER XLVII.—MR. SCREWBY'S CHECK.

MR. JOHN SCREWBY had, indeed, been about to administer the garotter's hug, for he had seen Garth leave the house, and had followed him through the unfrequented street until he had turned down, here affording an opportunity that Mr. John Screwby did not feel disposed to resist.

Times had been very hard with the latter gentleman, who, buoyed up by the hope of obtaining the reward, had fallen into the habit, while that hope lasted, of boasting amongst his companions of the luck that was about to befall him. That luck, though, had never been his, and the failure of several little adventures had also tended to lower Mr. Screwby's banking account.

Hence he had been on the look-out for some days past in case an unconsidered trifle or two should fall in his way—Robert Garth's fate making him one of the trifles.

The opportunity was excellent; the hour was getting late; a glance up and down the street had shown him that there was not a soul in sight; while, as to the houses, for the most part the lights were now in the upper storeys.

Mr. John Screwby's teeth glistened brightly, and, with a rapid action, he stepped forward, at the same time softly turning up his cuffs as if to strike.

It was a chance, and no mistake, he thought: nothing could have happened better—cash, a watch and chain, and a bit of revenge, all at one swoop; for, if it had not been for this swell, the old gent

would have written his cheque for the reward, and there would have been the end.

A quarter—one-half—of the street had been traversed, and Screwbly felt that it was time to close. He gave another glance behind him—all right. If he had only had a mate now, how easy the job would have been! But, then, a mate would have wanted half the proceeds, and there might have been a row afterwards and a split; so it was better as it was.

Hunting—sporting of any kind! Pooh! What—could it be in comparison to this sort of thing? so exciting, with such a nice tinge of danger in it; and then the game was so profitable! Mr. Screwbly licked his lips, as, with head down and hands held in true pedestrian fashion, he pressed on.

Now was the time, then; he had closed to within a yard as they went swiftly on; a dash in, and it would be done—the arm thrown round the victim's neck, a sharp twist, a kick at his legs, and he would be down on the pavement, which would effectually stun him, then a little rapid manipulation, and all would be right.

"Now for it, then!" he mentally exclaimed, and he raised his arm.

Is there, or is there not, some instinct of coming danger—some strange, electric wire of sympathy, along which, as rapidly as thought, speeds the warning—Look out! What do psychologists say? Some are for, some against, the possibility of such influences.

Take, then, your own experience, and judge: see how often, as if feeling the *wind* of the coming peril, people have been known to swerve aside and escape. Instances almost numberless might be cited where the prey has been balked of his prey; even as it was here, when, just as Screwbly, with raised arm, was in the act of making his noiseless spring, Garth turned suddenly, faced his enemy, and they stood for a brief instant touching.

The next moment Screwbly drew back, to gather force, and, with hands crooked after the fashion of the talons of a beast, he leaped at Garth's throat, but only to receive right upon that ugly flat nose of his a tremendous blow, struck right from the young man's shoulder.

In itself the stroke seemed hard enough to have felled an ox, but joined to it there was the force with which Screwbly was making at his destined prey—the two forces added forming a total whose result was a dull, unpleasant-sounding thud, a heavy drunken stagger, and then Mr. John Screwbly seemed to collapse after the fashion of one of those huge, towering chimney-shafts which public safety has decided must come down. To raise a scaffold and remove the bricks piecemeal would be expensive, so gunpowder is generally brought to bear; the mine is made, charged, and the contrivers retire to a distance while it explodes; and then there is no tottering here or there of the mighty tower of brickwork—it does not, after the fashion of the chimney in the old nursery rhyme, sway east, west, north, or south, but crumbles suddenly down in one heap, disintegrated, as it were; and so—omitting the disintegration—was it with Mr. John Screwbly: he did not bend or stagger, but came down in one curious

heap, emitting, at the same time, a groan that sounded as if the collapse were fatal.

"Ullo! What's up now?" greeted Garth's ears, as he stood binding a handkerchief around his bleeding knuckles, and gazing at his fallen adversary, who lay without motion.

Garth turned, to find that, according to rule—a rule probably promulgated by the heads of the department, on account of the saving thus effected in uniforms—a police-constable had made his appearance as soon as the danger was at an end.

"This man was about to garotte me, and I struck him down," said Garth.

"Then you must come on and enter the charge," said the constable. "Now, then, rouse up, here!" he continued, giving Mr. Screwbly a shake which made his head tap the pavement in a most unpleasant manner; till, in a dreamy, confused way, he rose to his knees, and then stood up, staring from one to the other. A moment later, though, he saw more clearly his position, and thrusting the constable back, he darted off towards Regent-street, and would have escaped but for the appearance of another of the law's myrmidons round the corner, whom the shouts of his fellow constable galvanized into activity such as stayed Mr. John Screwbly in his ponderous career; and upon Garth and the other coming up, it was to find the captive prone upon his back, and swearing powerfully.

This time the ignominious bracelets of the ill-doer were produced, and a sharp "click-click" told that they were secured in their places.

"I'd putt a pair round his legs, if I had my way, that I would," growled the first constable. "What did he want to bolt like that ere for?"

The man took a great cotton handkerchief from his heavy hat, and with it mopped his heavy brow, for—perhaps another reason why the police are tardy in their movements—he was tightly buttoned up in a coarse, heavy great coat, being enough to produce the perspiration which moistened his face.

"Yer might ha' known you'd ha' been took again, without coming them games," he growled again, taking it as a deep offence to his own dignity that the culprit had tried to escape after he was took. But Mr. Screwbly did not condescend to reply with words: his responses were all in looks, and those glances were of a class that the second constable stigmatized as "gallows;" but whether deserving of that appellation or no, they were sufficiently evil—heightened, as they were, by a stained countenance and swollen eyes—to startle any one upon whom they fell.

It was too late for there to be much of a gathering; and, besides, the station was tolerably near at hand; in which place of security Garth saw his assailant lodged, before seeking his own temporary home.

CHAPTER XLVIII.—COMING EVENTS.

THE morning came before Garth had found sleep visit his pillow; and after an early walk he met Sir Richard at breakfast, to find him very pale, but calm and composed.

It was evident to the young man that the father was losing hope, and that he was having a hard

struggle to resign himself to the cruel fate that had befallen him. Two months had now elapsed, and not a shadow of a clue by which Lionel could be traced had been found.

"I have been thinking, Garth," said Sir Richard, as they sat over their meal, "that it would be cruel and unjust of me to detain you here any longer. You have your career marked out, and every day I keep you here is to your injury."

"Never mind that, Sir Richard," said Garth. "I am as deeply interested in the search as yourself, and I cannot give up hope so easily. When I feel despair creeping upon me I will give up—not before. But you are better this morning?"

"More resigned, Garth—more resigned," said the old man, sadly. "It is time to try and bear it."

Garth said nothing. What could he say that would not have worn the guise of a well-meant platitude at such a time; and, soon after leaving the room, he made his way anxiously to the police-court.

For there was a strange feeling in the young man's breast that he had at last run the villain to earth. This man, whom he had recognized on the previous night as the informer, and also as a low-browed scoundrel who had watched them at the bird-dealer's, was poor Lionel's destroyer. Why not? It was mere suspicion; but might he not have committed some foul deed, with Lionel Ambley for victim, even as he had essayed on the previous night, as it was by the narrowest shade that he had himself escaped: poor Lionel was, perhaps, caught in one of the vile purlieus of the Dials, and had been then dragged away and hidden after being plundered; while to divert suspicion, with extra cunning, where no suspicion existed, this scoundrel had tried to lay the blame upon the house of Wragg.

Suspicions these, certainly; but, as Garth walked on, from being shadowy they gradually grew more solid and firm; so that he eagerly waited at the court the turn of Mr. John Screwby, whose vile countenance, when placed in the dock, wore anything but an improved aspect, with the addition of a damaged nose and two hideously discoloured eyes.

The case was plain enough, as far as the attempt at garotting was concerned. Suspicion of other matters, of course, could not be touched upon; but there were several little ugly facts brought forward concerning Mr. John Screwby's character—touching six months' imprisonment for this, two months for that, a year for something else; altogether, a total of four years for different offences—that the people there could attest to. Consequently, as Mr. Screwby's name stank in the nostrils of the law, he was remanded, with the certain prospect of being committed for trial at the next hearing.

CHAPTER XLIX.—CANAU'S STORY.

WEARY and unsettled, Garth strolled down the next evening to the Dials, where the first face he encountered was that of D. Wragg, who was seated behind his counter, with the shutters up and the gas turned down very low.

"Oh, yes—you can go up," said the little man; "but don't you make no mistake, and think I aint so sharp as I should be because I let that out. I shouldn't have said nothing if it had not been for

that drop of drink; and I shouldn't have taken that, if it had not been along of that friend of yours—cuss him! What did he want to come here for at all, bringing misery and wretchedness in a poor man's home?"

D. Wragg ended his speech almost with a whine, wiping away the maudlin, drink-begotten tears; while, seeing from the man's state that it would be of little avail to remind him of the cause of Lionel's first visit, and being at a loss to comprehend his words—piecing them, as he did, with his friend's disappearance—Garth soon left him to ascend the stairs.

On entering the room, he found Canau sitting up in bed, holding one of Linny's hands in his.

"Aha!" he said, softly, "you have come again then. What news of your friend? None? Aha! I suspected D. Wragg once, and he trapped me like one of his pigeons. But no; he has no secrets—he only hides away his dogs in holes and cupboards, and we think him mysterious, and go looking—to find what? There was nothing to find. We have strange ideas, all of us, and we all have suspicion of one another. I have often been ready to think that D. Wragg knew where your poor, foolish friend has gone, and he thinks the same of me; and one poor weak wretch outside says it is a judgment upon me that I am struck down, and that it will save me from what the people here call de 'scragg'—I shall not be hung in De Vieux Bailey. But they are sots—fools, all."

Garth sat by the bed, puzzled beyond measure at the injured man's language; for either he was rattling on with the volubility of his nation, or else making motions for silence with his fingers, as if it would be impossible for him to speak again. Then the young man glanced at Linny, who was seated by the sick man's pillow, pale and troubled of aspect, evidently as much puzzled as Garth himself, and hardly able to realize the situation.

"Monsieur, I shall not die," the old man exclaimed, suddenly. "I shall not die now—I cannot die, there is too much gladness in my heart. I wish that you, too, were glad. You have not found him, then? Ah, I grieve, because I know what that poor old man must suffer. But see what has come to me, and I not to know in all these years, when my heart was yearning towards her, and I loved her—loved her dearly. Oh, Marie, Marie! It is like new life."

Turning his face towards her, the old man drew Linny nearer to him, till one of her soft cheeks rested against his wrinkled forehead; and then one arm held her soft, yielding form in a long, loving embrace, while, moved by emotions that he could not have analyzed, Garth turned away, to walk to the window, and stand gazing down into the gaslit street.

"But I am rude, Monsieur Garth," said the injured man, at last. "Forgive a father his weakness. I am sick now—almost childish; but I seem to find strength each moment. It is a new birth to me, this, and I cast off that old name of infamy and disgrace. Canau was an idiot—an imbecile—a weak coward, who dare not fight with his troubles; but now I take again my old name, De la Rue, which was one

of honour. I shall live again—I feel it—I know it—but for this I should have been weak and cowardly, as I have always proved; and I should have died.”

“Look at her!” he panted, after a pause, during which a few words of advice which he should keep



quiet were set aside. “She is my very own. He—that man—I love him now, in spite of all his failings. I would embrace him if he were here. He confessed it all last night; for I knew that there was something he should tell me. I was blind, and deaf, and an imbecile when I was Canau, and he gave me hints. But I love him! Was not his the hand that tried to save? Would he not have saved her, too, when mad with— But I am mad myself with joy. Hist! then, I hardly know what I say. I forget that there are others here. Go for awhile, *ma p'tite*. Take her, Janet, *mon enfant*—I will call you back soon.”

He once more drew Linny to him and kissed her tenderly, gazing at her with lingering eyes as Garth opened the door; and the two young girls passed out—Linny, with bent and averted gaze; Janet, with her harsh features contracted as if from pain.

“It was kind of you to come. I thank you,” continued the injured man. “Will you sit here? It is handy; and I have much to say—I want you, too, to feel confidence in us.”

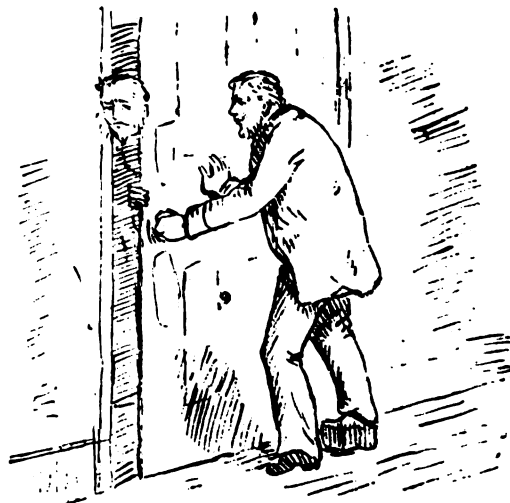
He pointed to the vacant place by his bedside, and Garth went and seated himself where Linny had been but a few moments before.

“Thanks, that is well. I am much in your debt. I told you much last night, monsieur; it pains me to tell you more; but I am so joyful of heart that I cannot keep back all that which is struggling to break forth. That man—D. Wragg, came up last night—he was drunk; he has been drunk every night of late since this trouble and these suspicions have come upon the house; and how am I to blame him, when I, too, in time of sorrow, have been glad to fly to brandy for solace? He was in liquor deeply; but I can say nothing, for it opened his heart to tell

me all he knew after he had heard my story. He was silent all these years; but then was not I? Did I say one word? No; I was worse. He gave me a hint sometimes; but I—did I drop one hint? Never!”

“This excitement will prove bad for you,” said Garth, softly. “Had you not better leave it now, lest the recollections should prove hurtful?”

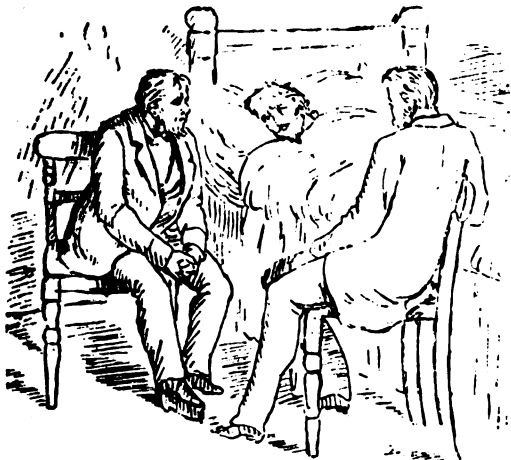
“Hurtful? Ah, no—ah, no! It seems to give me a new life. All day I have lived as I have not lived before. What is this little pain? Bah, it is nothing. I would be torn to pieces a score of times for such joy. Listen—I can see it all now, just as he told me. It was night, and the streets empty, when he saw her—her, *ma femme* Carline. Ah, *mon Dieu!* driven from her home by cruel hands, despairing at my desertion. He saw her making for the river—for the steps—and he followed her. He knew from her wild looks that there was the great despair in her heart—the despair that drives souls before it from this world—and, lame as he was, he followed her. Ah, yes! I see it all now—the black, slimy, wet steps, leading down to the river rushing along towards the sea. I hear, too, in my fancy, her wild cry as he caught up to her, kneeling at the foot—kneeling with the water, black, and muddy, and hungry, trying, as it leaped on her dress, to drag her to itself, and to bear her swiftly away upon the long journey. I see it all—the darkness, the struggle as he caught her, and tried to drag her back. I hear, too, her poor shriek as she tore herself from him, thinking, poor lost one, that she was about to join me. She freed herself completely; and although he tried again to stay her, it was in vain. She broke away, and he slipped and fell upon the muddy stones, to see as he rose that she had



taken a plunge, but alone. He held tightly to her little burden, and wrapped it in the shawl she left in his hands, when he sat down there for one—for two hours, trembling and cold, listening to the clocks as they seemed to sound at her death. For, yes, she

thought, poor soul, that she had gone to join me; but I—coward—weak—I stayed.

"But that good Wragg, he took care of the tiny gift which the *bon Dieu* had placed in his hands; and in time I was, somehow, led to his house. I



know not how it was, but I was brought here to make friends with him after I had lodged some days; and I dwelt here, ready to lavish what weak love I had left upon those children. For I seemed to have little love left then, monsieur; but it was not all lost, it was hidden away—forced back by my sorrows into the depths of my breast. I must have been led here to act as guardian to them—to teach them and be their guide; and oh, monsieur, but I am full of joy but for two things!"

"And what are they?" said Garth, who sat wondering whether this was sober reality or the wanderings of a troubled brain.

There was no answer, for the old man seemed to be gazing inwardly, and not to have heard the question, which was repeated—

"What are they?" said Garth.

"Fear is one," said the old man, slowly—"the fear that she will blush for me. For, look at her—how sweet, and bright, and pure a flower she has grown! It was not surprising; she—her poor mother's child—could have been none other, even here, amongst all that is contemptible and vile—where, when once you have sunk down to the mire—the foul, hideous mire—you cannot rise. Yes," he said, slowly and sadly, "see what I am—see to what I have sunk. I fear that she will blush for me."

"She is too true-hearted and gentle," cried Garth, eagerly, with an earnestness that almost startled himself.

"Yes, yes; you are right; she is too good, too gentle, too loving. But for all that I am not worthy to be her father. I can rise, though—I can alter; she shall yet be a lady in position, as she is by birth. Yes, yes; that is the future, for I shall live."

"You said, though, that there were two things," said Garth.

And then he rose, quite startled; for the injured man had uttered a sigh of pain, and was leaning back upon the pillow, his face pallid and contracted with pain.

"Shall I have the doctor fetched?" said Garth, earnestly.

"No, no! I shall be better—be well directly. The pain is sharp for a few moments. Ah, bah! it is nothing. I shall live. I shall be well soon," cried De la Rue. "I do not trouble myself at all. It is a pleasure since it has brought me all I could have wished for—save one thing—save one thing," he said, in low, sad tones. "But about your friend, about this young man, what of him? But, hark! Mon Dieu, listen! Is there trouble in the house?"

Garth started up, and crossed the room; for there was evidently something important on the way. Amidst a good deal of noise, there arose the sound of loud voices in altercation, and, as he opened the door, D. Wragg could easily be heard, as he exclaimed—

"Don't you make no mistake, now. I'm not going to have my place searched again; so now, then. Yes, he is here; and if he is here, what of that? There aint no harm in his coming here, if he likes, is there? No one aint going to burke him, so you needn't be afraid of that. I'll fetch him down for you."

Directly after, there was the "thump, thump," of D. Wragg's heavy boots on the stairs.

"Tis for me," said Garth, turning to the occupant of the bed; "perhaps there is news."

"But you will tell me if there is, monsieur?" cried De la Rue. "Think, monsieur, for my sake—our fair fame—the sake of my child."



Garth was too much excited to answer, as he turned once more to the door, to be confronted at the bottom of the first flight of stairs by D. Wragg, and, closely following, Sergeant Prout.

A few words from Sergeant Prout, in a low tone,

had the effect of setting D. Wragg off into a series of terpsichorean evolutions that were hideous in the extreme. Certainly, a dance was intended, with accompanying stamps of the thick boot and snappings of his fingers; but how he could possibly have continued to jerk, and start, and jig as he did, and yet live, was a puzzle [that diminished the far-famed Gordian Knot into a contemptible cat's-cradle of Berlin wool. Dislocation? It might have been thought that he was out of joint from crown to toe; that the articulation of his vertebræ even was destroyed, and india-rubber had taken the place of his muscles.

"I told you so—I told you so," he shouted; "now don't you make no more mistakes, any of you, because—hip, hip, hooray! I say, though, sir, is there any little thing in the shop—don't say no, now. Oh, aint I glad!"

Another triumphal dance succeeded D. Wragg's eloquent burst, when he stumped off, sowing turnips as hard as he could, to find Mrs. Winks, while Garth hurried back into the room where De la Rue was lying, to whisper one word in his ear, as the sick man fell back with a sigh of satisfaction.

"I am content now," monsieur," sighed the old man. "I could not bear that there should be a slur upon the place where we had dwelled for so many years—at least, not such a slur as that. But there, go; I see you are anxious."

And as the young man hurried from the room, De la Rue repeated, with brightening eye, the word that Garth had uttered: it was—

"Found!"

CHAPTER L.—JOHN BROWN.

"IT'S all against rule and regulation, and that sort of thing," said the sergeant, as he and Garth were being jolted over the stones in a Hansom cab; "but ours is a particular case."

"But it seems so strange," said Garth; "I can't understand it."

"Strange, sir. 'Pon my soul, sir—if you'll excuse me for saying so—I'm quite ashamed of myself. Thought I was up to more than that; and yet, here's all the wind taken out of my sails, and I'm nowhere."

Garth nodded, for he wanted to think; but the sergeant rattled on—

"It's always the way with your biggest puzzles, sir; the way to find them out is the simplest way—the way that's so easy that you never even give it a thought till it occurs to you. Perhaps you remember that chap in the story, sir, as wanted to keep a certain dockeyment out of the way of the foreign detectives—French police—over the water—secret police, I think they call themselves—not that there's one who can hold a candle to our fellows. Spies, perhaps, would be the better name for them. Well, he knew that as soon as he was out they'd search the place from top to bottom. Well, what does he do? Hide it in the most secret place he could think of? Not he; for places that he could think of as being the safest, perhaps they might think of too. He was too foxy, sir; and he just folds it up like a letter, sticks it in a dirty old envelope, and pops it into the card-rack over the chimney-piece, plain, for all folk to see; and, as a matter of course, they never

so much as look at it. That's just been the case with the young squire here: he's been stuck up in the card-rack, over the chimney-piece, chock before my eyes, and I've been shutting 'em up close, so as not to see him, when he's been as good as asking me to look. There, sir, I haven't patience with myself, and I'm going to ask them to put me on the sooperannuation list, and get put along with the pensioners, as I call 'em. Mysterious disappearance! why, it wasn't anything of the sort, sir. But, here we are."

The cab was checked as he spoke, and, alighting before a great, gloomy-looking building, the sergeant led the way up a flight of stone steps into a hall, where a liveried porter saluted him with a nod.

"Here, bring us the book again, Tompkins," said the sergeant.

And the porter reached a large folio from a desk, and placed it before the sergeant upon a side table.

"Here you are, sir," said the sergeant, eagerly, as he turned back some leaves to one which bore the date of the disappearance. "Now, look here."

He pointed to an entry in the accident register, for they were in the entrance hall of a large hospital.

"Look at that, sir," said the sergeant again, "and tell me what you think of it."

Garth bent over the book, and read:—

"Brown, John, stableman, run over by cab. Severe concussion of the brain."

"Now, sir, what do you make of that?"

"Nothing at all," said Garth, blankly.

"Nor more did I, sir. I wasn't looking after John Brown, a stableman; but Mr. Lionel Ambley. But that wasn't all. I've seen this case—I've been to the bedside, and then I didn't think anything of it, I was so clever."

"But does that relate to him?"

"To be sure it does, sir. I tell you, it's easy enough, now that one can see through it; but I couldn't put that and that together before. Name never struck me a bit, when it ought to have been the very key to it all. He was knocked down and run over by a cab, when out on his larks; got his hair cut short, and his mustacher shaved off. There's his clothes, too, upstairs—reg'lar stableman's suit—masquerading things—such togs for a gent like him to wear! Poor chap, though, it was a bad case; for he was nearly killed. Well, of course, they brought him here, and asked him his name; when, just being able to speak, he says the very last thing that was in his poor head before the sense was knocked out of it, and all its works were brought to a standstill. 'What's your name?' they says; and, as I said before, he answers the very last thing as was in that head before he was stopped short, and that was the name of the place he meant to go to—Brownjohn-street; and saying it, no doubt, very feebly, they didn't hear any more than the Brownjohn, so they put him down as Brown, and his Christian name after it, as is their custom, John—Brown, John; and here he's laid insensible to this day. But there, come on up, sir."

Following an attendant, Garth and the sergeant were ushered into a long, white-washed ward, where, on either side, in their iron bedsteads, lay sufferers from the many accidents constantly occurring in the

London streets. Here was a man who had fallen from a scaffold, there one who had had his arm crushed by machinery, and all around misery enough to affect the stoutest heart.

The sergeant, though, had no eye for these; and swiftly leading the way down the centre, Garth followed to where, weak, pale, and helpless, on his bed of suffering, lay Lionel Ambley, his hair shaven from his temples, and the large surgical bandages about his head adding greatly to the cadaverous expression of his countenance.

There was not the slightest doubt of his having suffered severely—it was written too plainly on his face; but he seemed now to be perfectly sensible, and as Garth approached he tried feebly to hold out his hand, whispering, as he did so, the one word—

“Bob!”

Sir Richard sat holding the other hand, anxiously watching his son's face, and hardly reassured by the house surgeon's declaration that with anything like care the young man was now out of danger.

“Don't speak to him, Garth,” said Sir Richard. “Don't talk, my dear boy; pray remember your condition.”

“All right,” was the reply, but in very feeble tones. “Seems as if I had been to sleep, and only just woke up. Confounded Hansom—over me in a moment—Martin's-lane. Remember no more.”

“Yes, yes, we know it all,” said Sir Richard; “but for my sake, now, be silent.”

“I must put in a word, too,” said the house surgeon, approaching. “I think he has borne as much as will be beneficial for one day. I must ask you to leave now. To-morrow he will be better able to bear a visit.”

“Another ten minutes,” pleaded Sir Richard—“not one instant more. We will not talk.”

The surgeon bowed his head; when Garth, after warmly pressing his friend's hand—for he somehow felt thoroughly at ease within his own breast—retired with the surgeon and the detective to another part of the ward.

“Curious case this, sir, eh?” said the sergeant

“Well—yes,” said the surgeon. “But what a strange whim. We had not the most remote idea but that he was some young groom out of place. I judged the latter from the whiteness of his hands, and I must really do our young friend the credit of saying that he thoroughly looked his part.”

“I believe you, sir,” said the sergeant; “for I was took in as regular as I was ever took in before. But there, they will do this sort of thing, these young gents, with nothing else upon their hands. I don't wonder at it. Must be a miserable life.”

The last remark was made so seriously, and in such perfect good faith, that the surgeon and Robert Garth exchanged glances, smiling the while.

“I hope,” said the latter, “that he will soon be fit to be removed.”

“Well, before long,” said the surgeon; “ten days or so. Not sooner—bad case rather. It was only this morning that he became sensible; and I don't think that even now he fairly realizes the length of time that he has been lying here. The horse must

have struck him full in the temple, and I wonder that he was not killed.”

“But this must be a most unusual case,” said Garth. “Surely, you never had a suspension of the faculties for so long?”

“Oh, yes,” said the surgeon; “such things do happen. Concussion of, or pressure upon, the brain, from a fracture, gives us at times some exceedingly interesting studies.”

Then, according to the custom of his *confrères*, the surgeon proceeded to dilate upon the number of eighths of an inch higher or lower which would have been sufficient for the blow to have caused death. But he was interrupted in his discussion by the approach of Sir Richard, who now came up, watch in hand.

“The ten minutes are at an end, and I thank you, sir,” he said. “I am, indeed, most grateful for your skilful treatment of my son. How can I ever burden myself of the obligation?”

“Oh, if you come to that, easily enough,” laughed the surgeon, who warmly believed, and held to the faith, that his hospital was the best in London, sparing no pains to let every one know that it was also one of the poorest. “We don't want such patients as your son here, Sir Richard Ambley; and you may depend in future upon receiving our yearly report, with, I hope, your name down as one of our donors.”

Sir Richard shook hands warmly, saying nothing, but thinking the more deeply; and then, bidding farewell to the sergeant at the door, he was accompanied by Garth back to their temporary home.

They had not been back long, though, before there was a step on the stair, and Mr. Still, the landlord, came up to announce a visitor.

“Who?” said Sir Richard.

“That there little jiggling man, sir, as Mr. Lionel Ambley used to buy his dogs of in—”

“Tell him I am unwell—that I cannot see him,” exclaimed Sir Richard.

And Mr. Still took his departure, but only to return at the end of five minutes.

“Well, Mr. Still?”

“I can't get rid of him, please, Sir Richard. He says he should be so glad if you'd see him only for a minute. He won't detain you more, and he's in a terrible way about your saying you can't.”

“Well, show him up,” said Sir Richard, who was not in the humour to refuse anything, in the gladness and thankfulness which now filled his heart.

“Shall I see him?” said Garth, offering to relieve Sir Richard of the task.

“No. Perhaps it is something about poor Lionel. I will see him.”

The next minute there was the peculiar thumping noise of D. Wragg's feet in the passage; but Sir Richard found time to say a few words before the dealer reached the room.

“Is not this the curious-looking man at the house we searched?”

“The same,” said Garth.

“Ah, yes—I forgot,” said Sir Richard; “these troubles have tried me. But here he is.”

Sir Richard was right; for the noise increased,

the door was thrown open, and the next moment, in a tremendous state of excitement, D. Wragg stood confessed.

CHAPTER LI.—MR. WRAGG ON PRINCIPLE.

"SARVANT, sir—sarvant sir," exclaimed D. Wragg, flourishing his hat first at Sir Richard and then at Robert Garth, while he worked and jerked himself about in a way that was perfectly frightful to contemplate. "Just give me a minute—I won't keep you both more than that—only I couldn't rest without coming in to tell you as it does us at home so much good because that young gent's found that you can't tell."

Sir Richard's brow knit as he listened, for he could not help associating the man before him with the cause of Lionel's disappearance; but he did not speak.

"Ah, I see you're cross about it," said D. Wragg, who caught the frown; "but never mind if you are—we're glad all the same. You thought we had to do with it."

"My good fellow, yes," exclaimed Sir Richard, hastily, for this touched him upon a tender point—he had been unjust. "Yes, we did think so, and I beg your pardon for it most heartily. It was a gross piece of injustice, and I beg that you will forgive it. If—"

"You're a regular thoroughbred game gentleman, that's what you are," said D. Wragg; "and I respect you, sir, that I do; and if you're sorry for having my place searched, why, there's an end of it; and as to forgiving you, why, we won't say any more about that."

"But if money—" continued Sir Richard.

"No, money aint got nothing to do with it," said D. Wragg, gruffly; "and yet it has, too, something about it. Only, you see, sir, I got hold of Sergeant Prout, and he's put me up to it all, and I wanted to come on about it. But what did I say when you came to me to search my place? Why, 'Don't you make no mistake,' I says; and now I says it again. Don't you make no mistake, I aint come after money; but just to say as I'm sorry as the young gent should have got into such trouble through coming to my place; and as to his getting better, all I've got to say now is that he sha'n't never come inside the shop again. I did have some of his money for different things; but there, lor' bless you, I put it to you, Mr. Garth, sir, if I hadn't had it to do me good, wouldn't he have spent it in orgin-grinders, or brass bands, or something? 'Pon my soul, sir, I never see a young gent as knowed so little of what money was worth."

"And do you mean," said Sir Richard, "that if my son gets well, and comes to your place again, you will not admit him?"

"Course I do. Don't you make no mistake, sir; I'm in real earnest, I am. And if at any time you want a dorg, or a score o'— Blow it; hold your tongue, will you?" he said, breaking off short in his speech, this portion of which was born of constant repetition. "But, don't you make no mistake, sir, he sha'n't come no more; and as to the place being searched, that wasn't your doing—that was spite, that was; and Mr. Jack Screwby, an ugly cuss! but they've got him for 'sault and violence,

and he'll get it hot, and no mistake, sir. And now my servise to you both, gents, and I'm off; but I thought I'd come to say as I was sorry and glad too: and you understands me, I knows."

As he turned to go, Sir Richard crossed the room, and tried to thrust a five-pound note into his hand, but D. Wragg waved him off.

"No, sir; I promised 'em at home if you wanted to do anything of that kind as I wouldn't take it, and I won't—so there now; but look here—don't you make no mistake, I aint proud, and if you says to me, 'Mr. D. Wragg, will you take a glass o' wine to drink my son back again to health?'—why, hang me if I don't!"

Crush went D. Wragg's hat down upon the floor as he spoke, and after his arms had flown about at all manner of angles with his body, he folded them tightly, and stood gazing from one to the other.

"You shall drink his health, indeed, Mr. Wragg," said Sir Richard, smiling; and the decanters being produced, D. Wragg did drink Lionel's health; then, in another glass, Sir Richard's; took another to drink Robert Garth's; and yet one more for the benefit of all absent friends; when he stumped off, evidently wonderfully steadied in his action by what he had taken.

CHAPTER LII.—AFTER A LAPSE.

"I CANNOT refrain from writing to congratulate you, my dear Garth," wrote Sir Richard Ambley, in a letter the young man sat reading, at Cambridge, as he leaned back, his temples throbbing, worn out with the arduous mental struggle in which he had been engaged. "Such an honour," said Sir Richard, "is, I know, not easily earned; and I feel that yours has been a long and gallant fight. It would have afforded me great pleasure if Lionel had been gifted with your assiduity, and been possessed of similar tastes; but I have never tried to force him. I can get from him but few letters now, so can readily suppose that you have not been more favoured, and are, therefore, most likely not aware of his engagement. I enter into these details with you on account of the interest you have always displayed in all concerning him. The lady is one whom he has known for many years, and all that I could wish. Need I say more? I might add, though, that it affords me the most sincere gratification. Lionel is staying here at present, and joins me in praying that if a Cambridge wrangler can so far condescend, he will come down here for a few weeks' rest."

The invitation was an earnest one, but Garth felt that he could not accept it. Eighteen months had passed since Lionel had been discovered in the hospital; and leaving town a few days afterwards, save to attend Mr. Screwby's trial Garth had not revisited the scenes of his adventures. For he had gone back to Cambridge to work; and worked he had, with an energy and determination that had startled even the most industrious. The result, though, had been success; and now, exhausted by the battle, he prepared himself for another visit to London, where he hoped to set certain disquieting doubts at rest for ever.

The day after his arrival he bent his steps towards the scene of so many adventures. On nearing the

Dials, he found the squalid, teeming place as of old, rejoicing in all its minglings of animated nature; the gin-palaces drove thriving trades; costermongers' barrows were piled with shell-fish; and the slatternly women and hulking, soft-handed men hung about or sat on the doorsteps.

But Brownjohn-street was not quite the same, for there was a brightness about the house of D. Wragg, evidently due to paint; and, upon approaching more closely, Garth found that D. Wragg seemed to be fuller of "nature" than ever.

He was in the shop as Garth entered the doorway, and his face brightened with genuine pleasure as he recognized his visitor, and he commenced jiggling and working about at a tremendous rate; but the next minute he had spread the newspaper he was reading upon the counter, and began to smooth it over a few times and make it perfectly straight.

"You're just in time, sir," he said; "only look here," and he tapped the paper over and over again. "Isn't it a game? Five years' penal. Came out after his twelvemonth for your job, and then got in for it again. I always said he must come to it. 'Don't you make no mistake, Jack Screwby,' I says. 'You'll be dropped on hotter yet, some day; mark my words if you won't.' For you see, as soon as he was out, he used to come worrying and cheeking me again. 'It'll come home to you, my lad; see if it won't.' And now there it all is, down in black and white, 'violent assault and 'tempt to murder.' Lots o' that sorter thing about here, bless you; and I could take you out here of an evening and point you out half a hundred of birds of that sort as want the same kind of salt put on their tails. But there, Jack Screwby's gone; and we sha'n't see no more of him for five years certain."

"And how is Mrs. Winks?" said Garth.

"There aint no such person living here at all now, sir," said D. Wragg, pulling up his collar, and speaking with dignity. "Don't you make no mistake, sir, Mrs. Winks is no more; and busy as a bee has she been this very week marking all her linen over again in big letters, 'W R A G G,' though I kep' on telling her—such is the beautiful clean, tidy, mending natur' of that woman—as there wasn't a rag among 'em."

"What, married!" ejaculated Garth, with real surprise.

"Married it is, sir. Don't you make no mistake, we both found the place awfully lonely as soon as they had all gone; and what with the theayter getting unpleasant on account of Mrs. Winks being stouter than she used to, and people's knees getting a deal in her way when she went round with her basket, and we having so much natur' in hand to attend to, we agreed between ourselves as she should give the theayter up, and take a share in this here business, sir; and all under one name, sir."

"And a very wise act, too," said Garth, smiling.

"Twenty years did I know her, sir, before I made the venter; and I don't mind telling you, sir, as is a gent I resper, if Mrs. D. Wragg wasn't quite so stout she'd be an angel. But, there, sir, don't you make no mistake; I'm as happy as the day's long. And talk about people's pussional appearance, why, look at me!"

In his modest self-disparagement, D. Wragg again became quite mechanical in his fits and starts, ending by crumpling up the newspaper and sweeping an empty cage from the counter with his turnip-sowing arm.

"Looks are nothing, Mr. Wragg, if the heart is right," said Garth, smiling; "but I must be going. I thought I would look in as I passed."

"Thanky, sir, thanky, which it's very kind. But just a minute, sir. I wanted to tell you as I've quite done with the dorg business, and refused lots o' commissions; and now, though I says it as didn't oughter, there aint a squarer shop in all London than this here. You'd hardly believe it, sir, but if I didn't sell that there Sergeant Proust a canary bird and cage last week, I'm a Dutchman. Brings his missus with him to choose it, he does, and calls agen yesterday—no, the day afore—to say as it sings splendid; and shook hands when he went, quite friendly. But won't you take just a taste of something before you go, sir? The missus will be put out at not seeing you. Stepped out, she has, for a few potatoes. And how we have talked about you, surely! Look here, sir, here's the werry thing as I hung up in that winder as soon as he was found—and none too soon neither, for I was obligated to have my shutters up for a week, and they did smash half a dozen of the first-floor panes as it was. 'There,' says I to the people, 'don't you make no mistake, I aint burked the gent as took it in his head to dress up, and come to see— But there, I won't say no more—and I hung out that, sir.'"

As D. Wragg spoke, he produced a dusty, smoke and fly-stained card, upon which, in large type, was printed—

THE GENT IS FOUND!

HE WAS RUN OVER

BY

A C A B ! ! !

(Signed) D. WRAGG.

"That there cost me two and six, sir; but don't you make no mistake, it saved me one pound two and six in winders, and ever so much more in character. But is there anything in my way, before you go, sir? Always happy to supply you, and can do a stroke of almost everything in natur', except dorgs, which, as I said afore, I've quite done with; for you see, sir, dorgs aint respectable, and don't do now."

Garth had some difficulty in getting away without seeing Mrs. D. Wragg, but he urged that his time was precious; and at last, after a hearty handshake, he was allowed to continue his way, thinking very deeply as he wandered slowly on, till he reached a quiet little street near to that named after the great Northampton earl—a tame, empty, flat, and apparently, to a spectator, highly unprofitable little double

row of houses, upon the door of one of which was a brass-plate bearing the words:—

MONSIEUR C. DE LA RUE,

PROFESSOR OF MUSIC.

CHAPTER LIII.—“VIVE L'AMOUR.”

“YES, Mister Dellyroo was at home,” said a very mealy-faced girl, who replied to Robert Garth's knock.

And he was shown into a barely-furnished but neat parlour, to wait while some lesson was being concluded in the back room; where a voice could be heard counting loudly—“ONE, *two*, three; one, *two*, three.”

In a few minutes, though, there was silence, then a buzz of voices, and then, very tightly dressed, very fierce-looking—with his closely-cut hair, as he walked behind an enormous moustache—the little exile entered.

“Ah, *mon cher, cher ami!*” he exclaimed; and in a moment his arms were round Garth. But directly after he seemed to recollect himself, and had drawn back hastily, to hold out his hand. “I beg pardon—thousand pardons; but I shall never be an Englishman.”

Then, running to the door, he called to Linny and Janet, who immediately entered the room; but stared with surprise on seeing their visitor, Linny colouring deeply, while Janet's face wore a pained and anxious expression.

Garth hesitated but for one moment, and then he, obeying the dictates of his heart, caught Linny in his arms, even in her father's presence, and kissed her tenderly.

“Aha,” said De la Rue; “but you do not apologize as I did, *mon ami!* I did draw back, and then make offer of my hand.”

“I do offer it—now and for ever,” cried Garth, “if Linny, for I must call her so, will take it. But you will forgive me, I know, for I cannot talk—I cannot make professions. I am, indeed, though, earnest and true, and I believe that you can read me aright.”

“Yes, yes—yes, yes,” said De la Rue, softly. “I know; but it is not for me to read. I will go away with Janet, and you will join us soon.”

“But, papa!” cried Linny, blushing a deeper crimson, as she hurried to his side.

“My little one,” he said, as he kissed her white forehead fondly, “shall I stay?”

“Miss De la Rue will, I hope, grant me a short interview alone,” said Garth, crossing to her side.

Linny, however, shrank from him, and retained her hold of De la Rue's hand.

“Linny—dear Linny,” said Garth, “I am no courtly wooer, only a poor student.”

“No—no!” exclaimed De la Rue; “it is not so! Have not we seen the honours you have won?”

“I have little to offer,” continued Garth, “but the true love of an honest man; but it is so true, so unselfish a love, that I blush not to offer it here in your father's presence. But I have much to learn from you, for I tremble—this is not the welcome I had hoped to receive. You shrank from me almost with coldness, knowing, as you did, that from our

first meeting I have loved you. Mine may be a simple love; but I offer you a heart that never yet gave thought to another. But still, I would not press you for that which was not yours to give. Tell me that you are not free in thought, and I will say no more.”

There was a few moments' pause, during which De la Rue fiercely stroked his moustache, and then thrust his hands into his pockets, shrugging his shoulders almost up to his ears, and then suddenly quitting the room. Though Linny essayed to speak, her words were inaudible, as she covered her face with her hands, and burst into tears.

Garth was startled by this sudden outburst, and at a loss to understand the cause. He turned appealingly to Janet, and caught her hand.

“Janet,” he exclaimed, “you know how I have loved her from the first. You will plead for me, will you not?”

“No; why should I?” said Janet, coldly, as she turned from him to Linny, whom she seemed to take to her breast, as if to protect in motherly fashion. “Remember your cruel suspicions. Do you think I could not read them all? I have told her a hundred times over that yours was but a passing fancy—that you saw her pretty face, and liked, and—that was all!”

“Fancy—passing—that was all! What do you mean? How can you be so unjust?” cried Garth. “Are there to be fresh riddles now?”

“Why should you trouble us here, when you are promised to some one else?” cried Janet, fiercely, as she turned upon him, holding Linny to her breast the while, and stroking her luxuriant hair.

“I promised to some one else?” laughed Garth. “Well—yes,” he added, gloomily; “I suppose it is to be so—to Alma Mater—to my studies.”

“Hush, Linny! No, I will not be silent,” cried Janet, excitedly, for Linny had turned imploringly to her. “I *will* speak to him—I will not be silent. Have you,” she exclaimed to Garth—“have you forgotten your stay in Essex, at a pleasant house, where there was a lawn?”

She looked at him searchingly, as if she would read his very thoughts, while she awaited his answer.

“Forgotten? No, certainly not,” said Garth. “Nearly two years ago, was it not?”

“Yes, yes; I see that you remember,” cried Janet, with a tinge of sarcasm in her tones.

“Well,” said Garth, looking from one to the other, evidently greatly puzzled, for Linny's eyes were fixed, as if her happiness rested upon his answer.

“Well,” said Janet, scornfully; “do you not remember?”

“You are speaking in riddles,” cried Garth, almost angrily, in his turn. “What does this mean? If you allude to my visit, nearly two years since, with a brother student to his home—yes, I was there a week—a pleasant, happy week of home-life, such as I have seldom known.”

“Happy, no doubt,” said Janet, harshly.

There was a simple look of doubt and bewilderment in Garth's face that directly disarmed suspicion, and the harsh aspect slowly faded from Janet's countenance as the young man said, calmly—

"Janet, I cannot understand what you would accuse me of, but it cannot be any falling away from my love for Linny; and as to being promised to another, I never till now spoke words of love to woman."

The doubt and suspicion faded away still farther, to leave poor Janet's countenance almost sweet in its expression of loving sadness, as she turned away to whisper in Linny's tiny, shell-like ear, and to kiss her. Then with her eyes suffused with tears, she gently pressed back Linny's clinging hands, and glided from the room. For, trembling, fluttering, half-pained, half-joyous, Linny would have followed, but there were other hands to arrest her half-way; and, as the door softly swung to, she felt herself drawn, unresisting now, closer and closer to another's breast.

Shall we tell of the words that fell now from Garth's impassioned lips—of the gentle, dove-like eyes that now looked up, half-scared, half-wonderingly in his, till that look was subdued and softened into one that was all love?—of the hours that fled like minutes, as he drew the yielding little form closer and closer, till her breath fanned his cheek, and her red, half-pouted lips seemed to ask the kiss they dared not then return? Enough, if we say that, as Garth sat proudly there, and whispered of the future, it was with a little head nestling in his breast; and when—how long after neither knew—De la Rue was heard loudly descending the stairs, violently humming one of the melodies from "Zampa," and, of course, so preoccupied that he stumbled over the mat, and kicked it back into its place before rattling the door handle, and entering—they did not move. Why should they?

De la Rue stood and gazed for a moment with bended head, half smiling, and he was evidently about to utter some bantering remark; but it did not leave his lips, which began to twitch, and his face to work, as he turned from them, to sink into a chair, cover his face with his hands, and sob like a child.

"Papa, dear papa," cried Linny, as she fled to his side—"you are not angry?"

"Angry? No, my little one, I am not angry," and he drew her to his breast, to kiss her passionately. "It is not anger; it is from joy to see you happy. But I am weak and childish, and it brought back old days of happiness."

At that moment the door was once more softly opened, and Janet entered slowly, to look from one to the other—curiously, inquiringly—till in Garth's happy face she read all she wished to learn, pressing his hand as he led her to a chair, and talked for long, that father and daughter might be undisturbed.

Evening had fallen upon them unawares, and the black shadows made Janet's countenance darker still, as, gazing at last earnestly in the face of Robert Garth, she laid one bony hand on his, and tried to speak, but the words died inaudibly away.

They were seated alone, for Linny was by her father's side.

"Did you wish to ask me something?" said Garth, softly; for he had in those happy hours learned the poor girl's secret.

"Yes."

"You may trust me," he said, gently; "but you are a woman of strong sense. Let me ask you something first—is it wise?"

"I think so," said Janet, sadly. "I am not mad now. I suffered once, but it is passed away, to leave me wiser and better, I hope. Do you think," she added, half bitterly, "that I shall be like the little one that cried for the moon?"

Garth sat silent for a while, thinking; but he was interrupted by Janet's whisper.

"Tell me—is he well?"

"Yes," said Garth.

"And you have seen him?"

"Not for above a year."

"But you have bad news; tell me what it is."

Garth was again thoughtful and silent. Should he tell her, or no? The pang must come some day; had it not better fall upon her now, and be at an end?

"Do you fear to tell me?" she said again.

Garth's answer was to gaze at her dimly-seen countenance for awhile, and then, slowly drawing Sir Richard Ambley's letter from his pocket, he placed it in her hands.

"Read it," he said, "when you are alone."

THE END.

Notes in Covent Garden.

PERHAPS our old friend John Thomas never shows to less advantage than when, inspired by spring, his "people" take it into their heads to visit Covent Garden Market. He has his sufferings with dogs—pet and well-washed animals; parcels, too, in paper he is compelled to carry; and once we even saw him made the bearer of a small Noah's Ark and a musical cart, and to a man whose mind is devoted to his uniform and legs, instead of being blunted to appearances by the cares of a family, such a duty must be excessively painful; but that Covent Garden marketing is worse than all. The carriage is drawn up, perhaps close by the church, and its late occupants, meaning probably to buy a few flowers, make for the central avenue. You may see them there every day this fine weather, with John Thomas, sublime and beautiful in his bloom of powder and manly grace, walking graciously behind. Flowers are purchased, and they are passed to him; and with some magnificent bouquet, what could look better? His manly breast is so strongly associated with sweet exotics, and Court days, that all seems well.

But now come the troubles. So many sweets—and savouries—are spread around, that "our people" begin to be tempted: that bundle of asparagus—each stalk like a young post—is purchased, and the nervous shock is visible upon the face of John Thomas as he takes it, with a manifest show of disgust, beneath his arm. The family greengrocer would have supplied such things; but there is a fascination in purchasing them at the market. And now that those asparagus heads form the thin end of the wedge, the troubles of the man in plush begin to grow fast and furious. He hardly holds the flowers, which he is told not to crush, and the

asparagus is beneath one arm, when the other is taken up by a punnet of new potatoes just purchased, when "our people" take a fancy to a quart of fresh-shelled peas.

It is painful, certainly; but remonstrance would be in vain; "our people" are smiling and excited, and they buzz about like bees from stall to stall, forgetful entirely of the feelings of their Mercury, who, groaning in spirit, slowly edges his way through the crowd to where his fellow-servant sits upon his box, comfortably serene. But there is no sympathy here: for when John Thomas has deposited what he is pleased to call the "demnition garden stuff" upon the front seat, and expressed his opinion that the carriage is being turned into a "cawnfounded market cart," all he obtains from the companion of his state of slavery is a wink and a sly chuckle; for coachmen, as a rule, rather enjoy their fellow-servants' trouble. John Thomas would gladly stay, and, did he dare, jump on the box to be driven round to one of the neighbouring "publics" for a glance within a pewter measure; but he knows his fate, and slowly and reluctantly he returns to where "our people" are as busy as ever.

They have actually purchased a salad—one of those round, open baskets, full of crisp mustard and cress, and curly lettuce, with a dash of tarragon, and a few discs of bright crimson beet-root. Disgust is unavailing: John Thomas's Berlins have to receive it from his mistress's delicate primrose kids. Worse still, the "guv'nor" has taken a fancy to an enormous cucumber, like an overgrown constable's staff, and in spite of rolling-in leaves, the head and tail—that is the two ends—of the obnoxious gourd will stick out in the most obtrusive manner.

"What next?" John Thomas mentally asks, as he takes the cucumber beneath his arm; and the reply comes in a basket of hideous fungi—mushrooms of artificial growth. The strawberries and cherries he would not mind so much; but just as he is going to retreat to the carriage to get rid of his load, he is arrested, to place beneath his arm what resembles a couple of green gingham umbrellas in their early stage of growth. But it is only supplementary salad, in the shape of a pair of huge lettuces, tied round what formerly was their waists with Russian matting. They are a great trial; for not being from one of the central avenue establishments, only from a common stall, there is no protecting paper, and the horrible things "come off" upon his neatly-brushed livery coat; their stumpy, milk-exuding roots, too, stand out behind; and perspiring profusely, and vowing he will give warning, John Thomas edges his way towards the carriage.

He mentally stigmatizes the people who smile at his misfortunes as "grinning hapes;" but they grin all the same, and he can almost feel the waiting costermongers' winks.

Wince? Aye—that he does—right through his frame at every allusion; and when a boy shouts "I'll have your cucumber!" the beads stand upon his noble forehead. But it is of no use to murmur; and though he shudders, and feels a pitying contempt for his fair mistress, who, flushed and happy, has totally spoiled her primrose kids, made a stain

upon her creamy parasol, and is now, with brightened eye, glancing around for something else to take her fancy; and also wonders how his master, who writes "M.P." at the end of his name, can so bemean himself by coming here; John Thomas bears it, for he thinks of the comfort of the servants' hall at home, of the ample food for filling out his frame, and keeping up the symmetry of his noble proportions.

There are the hours, too, floating across his imagination when "our people" dine out, and he is at liberty to lean against the door-post and watch the people pass. The carriage exercise, also, is pleasant; and in fine weather the lounge outside some fashionable shop makes life pass pleasantly away. So the warning remains in abeyance; and upon the principle of noble sufferance, "our people" are allowed to flit from shop to stall, and back again, thoroughly enjoying their visit to Covent Garden. For if there is a pleasant hour to be spent, it is there, upon some morn in May, where flower and fruit assail each sense with memories of the sunny country from whence they come.

But there is an end to all things, even to the troubles of our friend; and the beaming look of satisfaction upon his face is worthy of a glance, as "our people" are at last safe among the vegetable treasures they have bought, when the door is closed, the box mounted, the wheels spin round, and John Thomas is borne towards the region that he most affects—"Westward Ho!"

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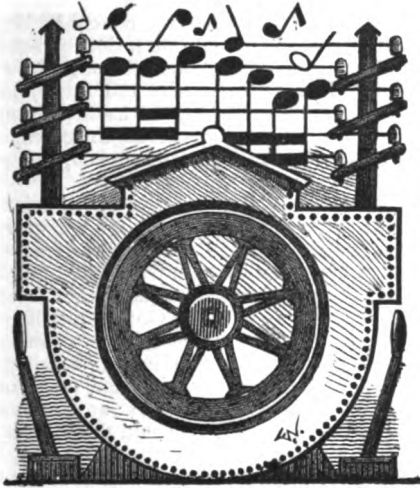
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CHAPTER I.—DUPLEX STREET.



"TUSH! some people are such fools!" said Richard Pellet; and, if people's judgment was right, he knew what a fool was as well as any man in the great City of London.

He was a big man, was Richard Pellet, Esq., C.C., shipper, of Austin Friars, and known among City men as the six-hundred-pounder, and he knew a fool when he saw one; but whether in his office in the City, or down at his place at Norwood—"his little place at Norwood," where he had "a morsel of garden" and "a bit of glass," and grew pine and melon, peach and grape, and had a fat butler in black, and a staff of servants in drab, trimmed with yellow coach lace—no matter where Richard Pellet was, he could always see in his mind's eye the greatest fool that ever breathed—the man whom he was always mentally abusing—to wit, his brother Jared.

But Jared Pellet always was a fool—so his brother said—and he was always filling the foolish cup of his iniquitous folly fuller and more full: he was a fool to be tyrannized over by his brother when a boy, and to take all the punishment that should have fallen to Richard's share; he was a fool to marry Lizzie Willis, who had not a penny, when Richard would have given his ears to have stood in his shoes; he was a fool for being happy—loved and loving; he was a fool to have such a large family, when his brother had none; he was a fool for being a poor, struggling man, while his brother was so rich; in short, taking Richard Pellet's opinion—which must have been correct, seeing how wealthy, and stout, and clean shaven, and chuff, and respected he was—there was not a bigger fool upon the face of the earth.

Just as if it was likely that a man could get a living in Clerkenwell by mending musical instruments in so unmusical a place!—doctoring consumptive harmoniums; strengthening short-winded concertinas; tuning pianos, and putting in new strings

at one shilling each; while the job of rebuffing a set of pianoforte hammers would set the family up for a week.

However, living or no living, Jared Pellet rented a little house in Duplex-street, Clerkenwell; and there was a brass plate upon the door, one which Patty Pellet brightened to such an extent that when the sun shone in Duplex-street, which was not often, it would kiss the bright metal and then shoot off at various angles, to dart into darksome spots where, directly, he seldom or never shone.

It was a bright plate that, and a couple more years of such service would have oiled and rotten-stoned and rubbed and polished out the legend, "J. Pellet, Pianoforte Tuner;" for at this time there was but little of the original black composition left in the letters, and as for the corner flourishes, they were quite gone. But there was a board up over the front parlour window, bearing, in gold letters, much decayed, the self-same legend, with the addition of "Musical Instruments carefully Repaired;" while, so that there should be no mistake about the in-dweller's occupation, a couple of doleful-looking, cracked, and wax-ended clarionets sloped from the centre hasp to either side of the said front parlour window—and where, by rights, there should have been one of those folding-door green Venetian-barred blinds, so popular in the district—there graced the bottom panes, "The Whole Art of Singing," "Bowstickski's Violin Tutor," and "Instructions for the Concertina"—fly-stained and dust-tarnished books, that had been put in on Monday mornings and taken out again on Saturday nights, in company with the cracked clarionets, ever since Jared Pellet had hired the house, and determined upon keeping it private on Sundays.

There was nothing else very particular about the house, save that it had once entered into the heart of its owner to have the front stuccoed, ever since which time the place had suffered severely from a kind of leprosy which made it shell and peel off abundantly; and that the top pane of the parlour window had once been hit by a tip-cat, forming a star whose rays extended to the putty all round, starting now from a round dab of the same material. Jared did not have that pane mended, saying that it would soon give way, and then they would have a fresh one in; but that starred and puttied pane bore a charmed life, having outlived every one of its eight brethren, who had all gone to the limbo of broken glass, while it survived. It may perhaps be mentioned, though, that there were some rusty iron railings laid horizontally beneath the window, turning the kitchen into a cage, and just sufficiently far apart to allow of playthings of every description being dropped into the area. Then would come the ringing of the door-bell to ask for restitution of the treasure, or else there would be the trouble of some child or other getting its foot firmly fixed between the railings, to remain the centre of a commiserating crowd, until the arrival of its incensed parent, and the extrication, minus shoe or boot, which of course followed the example of Newton's apple, and illustrated the force of gravity for Jared's children.

There was a watchmaker's next door to Jared's on the right, and a watchmaker's next door to the

left, and watchmakers in front all along the street. In fact, it was altogether a very mechanical place, although Richard Pellet said that no one but a fool would ever have thought of living there.

But Jared's house had an inside as well as an out. The rooms were neither light, airy, nor large; and it was probably from sanitary ideas that Jared refrained from filling his apartments with furniture, and from covering his floors with hot, thick carpets. But well or ill-furnished, the place was scrupulously clean, and possessed an ornament that a prince might have envied, in the shape of Patty Pellet. Talk of classic types, noble features, chiselled nostrils, or heads set upon swan-like necks, until you are tired, and then you will not produce a word-painting worthy to vie with blushing, down-bloomed, soft-cheeked Patty, with her brown wavy hair half hiding her little pinky ears, which seemed to be continually playing in and out from behind two of the brightest curls ever seen. As for her forehead—well, it was a white forehead, and looked nice, and pure, and candid, while beneath it her eyes were laughing and bright; and her lips—well, it was a fact that many a quiet, old-fashioned man wanted to kiss them, innocently and pleasantly too, without feeling a blush of shame for the wish; for Patty's lips seemed as if they had been made on purpose to kiss, and more than one thought that it would be a sin to neglect the opportunity.

What further description need be given, more than to say that she was like the best parts of her father and mother condensed—no ill-looking couple they—that she was just eighteen, and washed all the children every morning before breakfast.

CHAPTER II.—AN IMPORTANT LETTER.

JARED PELLET sat in the front parlour—*pro tem.* his workshop; while to keep the sun from troubling him, Patty had been pinning up the broadsheet of a newspaper in the window, and now descended by means of a chair. For Jared was busy working a curious-looking pair of bellows with his foot, and making a little tongue of metal to vibrate with a most ear-piercing but doleful note in the process of being tuned, before being returned to the German concertina, where its duty was to occupy the part of leading note in the major scale of C.

"Hum-um," sang Jared, checking the current of air, and striking a tuning-fork upon his little bench. "Hum-um! A bit flat, eh, Patty?"

"Just a little," said Patty, looking up from her work.

"But there, only think!" cried Jared, dropping the tuning-fork, leaving his task, and crossing to an old harmonium, over whose keys he ran his bony fingers—"only think, if I could—only think, if I could get it. Fifty pounds a year for two practices a week, and duty three times on Sundays. Black, of course, for your mother; but what coloured silk shall it be for you, eh, Patty?"

"Silk?" said Patty, wonderingly, and her eyes grew rounder.

"Yes, silk—dress, you know," said Jared, jumping up again from the harmonium, and walking excitedly about the room. "Only think, if I could get it—Jared Pellet—no, Mr. Jared Pellet—or ought it to be esquire, eh, Patty?—organist of St. Runwald's. But

there," he continued, with a grim smile, "this is counting your chickens before they are hatched, and when you have not heard one solitary peck at the shell. Heigho, Patty, if the wind has not been and blown down my card house!"

Then reseating himself at his bench, he began to make the metal tongue vibrate furiously, sending a very storm of wind through it, so furiously he worked his foot—now making the note too sharp, now too flat, and taking twice as long as usual to complete his task, which, however, was at length accomplished, when Jared rose hastily from his bench, and went to the table to write a letter.

For be it known that the post of organist to St. Runwald's was vacant—the church that everybody knows, situated as it is in a corner, with houses all round it, turning their backs as if ashamed, and hiding it, lest people should see what a patch Sir Christopher Wren made of the fine old Gothic building when he restored it, squaring the windows, putting up a vinegar-cruet steeple, padding, curtaining, brass rodding, and cushioning the interior, to make calm the slumbers of miserable sinners; and one way and another so changing it, that could the monks of old once more have gazed upon the place, they would have groaned in their cowls, and called Sir Christopher a barbarian. But the only groans proceeding from cowls were those which were heard upon windy nights, when showers of blacks were whirled round and round, and then deposited in the corners of the window sills, or against the lead framing, whence they could filter through in a dust of the blackest, which would gather upon the pew edges, in despite of the pew-opener's duster, ready to be transferred to faces by fingers, or to rise of itself and to make church-goers sneeze and accuse the old place of being damp, the churchwarden of being stingy with the coals, the pew-opener of not lighting the fires at proper time to air the church, the vicar of spinning out his sermons, finishing off by accounting for the smallness of the attendance by a declaration that it was impossible for a parish to be religious where there was such a damp church. And all this through the sootiness of the neighbouring houses; for St. Runwald's was as dry as a bone—as the bones of the old fathers who lay below in the vaults, placed there hundreds of years ago, when Borgle's-yard was occupied by a monastery, and matins and vespers were rung out from the church tower. Jared Pellet, in after times, could have told you it was not damp, in spite of the words of Sampson Purkis, the beadle, who said that there were "sympsons," else why did the steel fastening of the poor boxes grow rusty, unless—but thereby hangs a tale. Jared could have told you the place was not damp, by the organ; for would not the stops have stuck and the notes refused to speak had there been moisture? But at this period he was in ignorance; for, incited thereto by his wife, his daughter Patty, and Mr. Timson the churchwarden, Jared Pellet was about to offer himself as a candidate, to perform which task he had now settled himself at a table—some four or five small faces that had come peeping in at the door being warned off by divers very alarming-looking frowns and shakes of the head.

But it was no easy task to write a letter at Jared

Pellet's. True, there had been a pennyworth of the best cream laid, and envelopes to match, obtained for the occasion; but the ink in the penny bottle was thick, and when thinned with vinegar, to prevent it from coming off the nibs upon the paper in beads, it looked brown and bitty. Then the pen spluttered, partly from rust, partly from having been turned into a tool for raising the tongues of silent harmonium notes. So fresh pens and ink had to be purchased, when Jared wrote one application, and smeared his name, and then said "Tut, tut, tut!" He wrote a second, but that did not look well; for there was a hair in the pen, and he put two n's in candidate. He then wrote a third, but only to find that he had done so with the paper upside down; when he exclaimed—

"There never was a letter yet that didn't get more and more out of tune—I mean didn't get worse—the more you tried."

Patty did not speak, only looked sympathetic, and as if she would gladly have written the letter herself. But Jared tried again, and this time a proper missive was written, passed round, and approved by both Mrs. Pellet and her daughter. Then the postage stamp was affixed to the envelope with paste, for Jared had managed to lick off all the gum; and at last, when the important document had been safely posted, its writer recollected half a score of things he ought to have said; and, after fidgeting all the evening, went off despairingly to bed, feeling certain that the post of organist could never be his.

CHAPTER III.—LITTLE PINE AND HER TEACHER.

CARNABY-STREET, Golden-square, where the private doors have their jambs ornamented with a series of bell-pulls like the stops of an organ, and the knockers seem intended to form handles that shall lift up and display rows of keys; but, generally speaking, the doors stand open, and the sills bear a row of as many children as can squeeze themselves in. The population is dense and the odours many; but the prevailing smell is that described by a celebrated character as of warm flat-irons, the ear corroborating nose and palate, for an occasional chink tells that the iron—not a flat one—has been placed upon the stand, while the heavy dull thump, thump, tells that some garment is being pressed. For this is one of the strongholds of the London tailors, and the chances are that the cloth cut upon the counter of Poole has been built into shape in Carnaby-street.

It was in the first-floor back, and in two small rooms, that Tim Ruggles—always Tim, though christened Timothy—a steady-going, hard-working, Dutch-clock kind of man, carried on the trade popular in the district. With his family of a wife and a little girl, he considered the two rooms ample; the larger serving for parlour, kitchen, workshop, and bed-room for little Pine, the other being devoted exclusively to sleeping purposes.

But you might have entered Tim's room a score of times without detecting little Pine's bed, which was an ingeniously contrived affair like a cupboard, which doubled up and doubled down, and creaked, and groaned, and sprawled about when in use; but had a bad habit of bursting open its doors when closed,

and coming down when least expected in the shape of a bedding avalanche. But these accidents only occurred when Mrs. Ruggles had ventured upon the doubling of that piece of furniture; for Tim was the only person who thoroughly understood its idiosyncrasies, and possessed the skill and ingenuity to master its obtrusiveness. In effect, the first thing to be done was to make the bed, which Tim did regularly; then, when all was well tucked in, to double back clothes and mattress, and with one rapid acrobatic evolution, performed in all its intricacies without a moment's hesitation, to kick its legs from beneath it as you seized it at the foot, force your knee vigorously into its stomach, and then, as it folded, to drive all before you back into a state of collapse, banging to and bolting the doors in its face before it had time to recover. For if you were not rapid in your motions, down you went with the recoil, to be pinned to the floor by an incubus of wood and sackling. But manage the matter as did Tim Ruggles, taking care that no corners of sheet, blanket, or quilt stood out between cracks, and to all appearance that bed might have been a secretary.

When work of any kind is going on there is generally a tendency towards untidiness; and to a certain extent it was so here, for in a corner there stood Tim's trestle-supported board, and the scraps and shreds snipped in his business occasionally fell to the floor, otherwise the place was scrupulously clean.

Tim was not a large man, either in person or ways. In fact, when cross-legged upon the board, he often seemed half lost under the garment he made. Dry he was, and shrunken, as if overbaked—a waster, in fact, from nature's pottery. The effect of the shrinking was most visible in his face, whose skin seemed not to fit, but fell into pucker, crease, and fold, above which shone—clear, white, and firm—his bald forehead and crown, fringing which, and standing out on either side, was a quantity of grizzled, frizzly, tufty hair, imparting a fierce look that was perfectly unreal.

Tim had just fetched his hot iron from the fire, and gone back to press off the garment he was completing. He had run his finger along the bars of a canary cage, and had it pecked by the bird within; gazed at the external prospect of back windows, cisterns, and drying clothes; sighed, wiped his nose upon a piece of cloth kept for the purpose; and then sat, sleeveboard in one hand, sponge in the other, the image of despair, as smothered cries, the pattering of blows, and half-heard appeals as of one who dared not cry out, fell upon his ear.

As Tim Ruggles sat over his work, with quite a shudder running through his frame, there rang out, in thrilling tones—

"Oh! oh! oh! Please not this time—not this time! Oh, don't beat me!"

Now louder, now half-smothered, till Tim twisted, and shuffled, and writhed, as if the blows so plainly to be heard were falling upon his own shoulders—each stroke making him wince more sharply, while his face grew puckered and lined, so as to be hardly recognizable.

"I can't stand it," he groaned at last.

And now he gave a start, for he had inadvertently placed his hand upon the hot iron.

Then came again the anguished appeals for pardon, accompanied by cry after cry that seemed to have burst forth in spite of the utterer's efforts to crush them down, till Tim, as he listened to the wailing voice, the whistling of stick or cane, and the dull thud of falling blows, seemed to shrink into himself as he turned his back to the sounds, stopped his ears with his finger and a wet sponge, and there sat crouched together, regardless of trickling water making its way within his shirt collar.

At last the cries ceased, and the silence was only broken by an occasional suppressed sob; but Tim moved not, though the door opened, and from the inner room came a tall, hard, angular woman, rigid as the old whalebone umbrella rib she held in one hand, leading, or rather dragging, in a child with the other. She was a woman of about forty, such as in an upper class of life would have been gifted with a mission, and let people know of the fact. As it was, she was but a tailor's wife, with a stiff neck: not the stiff neck of a cold, which calls for hartshorn, friction, and flannel, but a natural rigidity, which caused her to move as upon a pivot when turning to address a speaker, at a time when with other people a movement of the head would have sufficed.

"Tim," she cried, as she moved into the room, opening and closing her cruel-looking mouth with a snap.

Tim heard the meaning cry, and starting quickly the next moment, he was busily at work, as if nothing had happened.

Mrs. Ruggles said no more, only proceeded to place her whalebone rod upon a perch over the fireplace. Her back was turned, a fact of which Tim took advantage to kiss his hand to the cowering child, when, save at distant intervals, she ceased to sob.

"I don't think you need beat poor Pine so," said Tim at last, in a hesitating way. "What was it for?"

"Come here," shouted Mrs. Ruggles to the child. "What did I beat you for?"

With the cowering aspect of a beaten dog, the child came slowly forward into the light: sharp-featured, tangled of hair, red-eyed, cheek-soiled with weeping. Tim Ruggles winced again as he looked upon her thin, bare arms and shoulders, lined by the livid weals made by the sharp elastic rod of correction, ink-like in its effects, the dark marks seeming to run along the flesh as the vicious blows fell. The poor child crept slowly forward, as if drawn by some strange influence, towards Mrs. Ruggles, her eyes resting the while upon Tim, whose face was working, and whose fingers opened and closed as if he were anxious to snatch the child to his heart.

"Now, ask her what she was whipped for," shouted Mrs. Ruggles. "Tell him. What was it for?"

"For—for—taking—"

"Ah! What's that? For what?" shouted Mrs. Ruggles.

"For—for—for stealing—for—for—Oh!—Oh!—Oh!" cried the child, bursting into an uncontrollable fit of sobbing, "I didn't do it—I didn't do it!"

And there she stopped short: the words, the

sobs, the wailing tone, all ceased as if by magic, as Mrs. Ruggles snatched the whalebone from its supporting nails.

"Yes—yes!" the child shrieked in haste, as the rigid figure and the instrument of torture approached—"for stealing the cake from the cupboard."

And then teeth were set fast, lips nipped together, hands clenched, and eyes closed, and the whole of the child's nine years' old determination seemed to be summoned up to bear the blow she could hear about to descend. Then the whalebone whistled through the air, and, in spite of every effort, the cut which fell upon the bare shoulders elicited a low wail of suffering.

A deep sigh burst from Tim Ruggles' breast, and he bent lower over his work, moving his iron, but over the wrong places, as he closed his eyes not to see the child fall upon her knees, and press both hands tightly over her lips to keep back the cry she could not conquer; her every act displaying how long must have been the course of ill-treatment that had drawn forth such unchild-like resolution and endurance.

"Now," cried Mrs. Ruggles, "no noise!" though her own sharp, unfeminine tones must have penetrated to the very attics as she spoke. "There—that will do. Now, get up this minute."

"But," said the little tailor, humbly, "you should always ask before you punish, Mary. I—I took the piece of cake out of the cupboard, because I hardly ate any breakfast."

"Tim—Tim—Tim!" cried Mrs. Ruggles; and as she spoke she looked at him sideways, her eyes gleaming sharply out of the corners. "You false man, you! But the more you try to screen her that way, the more I'll punish. How many times does this make that I've found you out?"

"Times—found out?" stammered Tim.

"Yes; times found out," retorted Mrs. Ruggles. "But I'll have no more of it; and so long as she's here she shall behave herself, and I'll cut her thievish ways out of her."

"But, indeed," cried Tim, pitifully, "it was me, upon my soul. It was me, Mary. Just look—here's some of the crumbs left now."

And he pointed to a few splintery scales of paste lying upon the board.

Mrs. Ruggles gave a nod that might have meant anything.

"I'm sure you should not beat her so," whimpered Tim. "Beating does no good, and may hurt—"

"Didn't I say I would not have her talked about," exclaimed Mrs. Ruggles, in threatening tones. "And how do you know? If she didn't want whipping this time it will do for next. Children are always doing something, and a good beating sometimes loosens their skins and makes 'em grow. You never had children to teach."

"Taint my dooty to have children," muttered Tim.

"What's that?" shouted Mrs. Ruggles. "Now, don't aggravate; you know I can't abear nagging."

"I only said, my dear, that it wasn't my dooty to have children, but yours."

Mrs. Ruggles gave her husband a look composed of half scorn and half contempt—a side look, which, coming out of the corners of her eyes, was so sharp-

ened in its exit that, though Tim would not look up and meet it, he could feel what was going on, and shivered accordingly. Meanwhile, Mrs. Ruggles took a bonnet from a peg, and tied the string tightly, as if in suicidal intent, snatched herself into a shawl, and rummaged out a basket, preparatory to starting upon a marketing expedition.

"Now, then, don't grovel there, but go to your work," shouted Mrs. Ruggles to the kneeling child, who bent before her as if she were the evil deity presiding over her fate.

Then the child's hands dropped from before her mouth as she flinchingly rose, and taking a copper lid from a side table, began with a piece of dirty rag to rub and polish the already bright metal, giving at the same time stealthy furtive glances, first at Tim and then at Mrs. Ruggles; while, in spite of every effort, a sob would swell her little breast, beat down her puny efforts, and burst forth, to make her shiver in dread of further blows.

CHAPTER IV.—THE NINTH PART OF A MAN.

THE room door had closed upon Mrs. Ruggles' rigid figure, her loud step, indicative of the woman's firmness, was heard, and then Tim and little Pine ceased from their tasks, and listened till an echoing bang announced the shutting of the front-door, when, half rising and leaning forward, Tim dashed down the garment he was making, opened his arms, and the child gave a series of bounds, and the next moment had buried her face in Tim's breast, winding her bare little arms about his neck, wringing her thin fingers as she clasped and unclasped them, moaning piteously the while.

"Just what I expected," exclaimed Mrs. Ruggles, in her hard sharp tones.

And, starting up, the guilty couple found that she had stolen back, and softly opened the door. But the next instant the child had seized lid and rag, and Tim was busily stitching away at a piece of lining which belonged nowhere, as he looked confusedly in his wife's face.

"Call yourself a man," exclaimed Mrs. Ruggles, with that peculiar bitterness so much used by women of her class. "Ah! I've a great mind to!" she exclaimed again, looking sidewise at little Pine, and making a dash at the whalebone; "but I don't know which deserves it most."

The child set her teeth hard, and shrank towards the wall, and Tim drew a long breath and clutched the big iron by his side, but without the slightest intention of using it for offence or defence, when Mrs. Ruggles again spoke—

"Don't let me come back again, that's all," she exclaimed.

And if his looks were a faithful index of Timothy Ruggles' mind, his heart evidently just then whispered, "I wish to goodness I could take you at your word."

Then the door was once more closed, the step heard again, the bang downstairs, and then there was silence in the room, broken only by the half-suppressed sobs of little Pine, and the impatient restless pecking of the bird in the cage.

Five minutes passed, and still there was silence, when Tim softly took up a yard measure from the

board, stole nimbly off on to his shoeless feet, opened the door and peered through the crack; and then, reaching out one hand, he touched a bell with the yard measure, making it ring loudly twice over. Then he softly closed the door, replaced himself and his measure upon the board, before leaping boldly and noisily off to cross the room, open the door loudly, and trot downstairs to answer the bell, the child earnestly watching his motions the while.

Down the stairs trotted Tim, and along the passage to the front door, to open it, look, and peer up and down the street, till apparently satisfied, when, closing the door once more, his face wore an aspect of full belief as he muttered—

"A runaway ring."

Tim hurried upstairs once more, but had his descent been made a minute sooner he would have seen the graceful form of his lady some half a dozen doors lower down, as she stood in conversation with a neighbour; but apparently satisfied, he climbed upon his board, placed his work ready to hand, and then, and then only, he held out his arms to the child, who was sobbing the next instant upon his breast.

"Don't, don't cry, my pet," he whispered, puzzling the while a couple of real tears which had escaped from his eyes, and, finding no friendly handkerchief at hand, were dodging in and out amongst the main-lines, and sidings, and crossings, and switches of the course of life, as mapped out in Tim's face, till one tear was shunted into his left ear and the other paused by the corner of his mouth.

"Don't cry, my pet," said Tim, caressing the child with all a woman's tenderness. "But come, I say, you must cheer up; for see what I've been making for you. But there, don't cry, my darling," and he pressed his cool, soft, womanly hand upon weal and burning score. "Now look," he continued, and from under a heap of cloth patches he produced a quaint-looking rag doll, evidently the work of many a stolen five minutes. "Now, then!" he cried, in the tones people adopt towards children, "what do you think of that?"

Then there was silence, while Tim eagerly watched the child, whose little mind seemed to be struggling hard between the ideas natural to its age and those of a forced and premature character. First she looked at the doll, then at its donor, and then, half laughing, half crying, she looked pitifully in Tim's face, before once more throwing herself, sobbing loudly, in his arms, where she clung tightly, as the little man patted her head, and smoothed and caressed her.

"I thought she'd have liked it," muttered Tim, looking down upon the little head in a disconcerted way, his face growing more and more puckered as he rocked himself to and fro, humming the snatch of some old ditty, treating the suffering little one as though she were a baby, till by slow degrees the sobs ceased, and Tim seemed more puzzled than ever, when the child raised her head, gazed in his face, her little wan aspect seeming to make her years older as she kissed him, saying—

"Please put it away, now."

Tim stared hard at the little thin face, as with one hand he reluctantly placed the doll beneath the cloth

shreds, holding her tightly with the other, till in a strange, old-fashioned way she kissed him again, saying—

"It was very kind of you."

And then she slipped out of his arms, crossed the room to the glass, and smoothed her hair; wetted Tim's sponge, and removed the tear-marks from her face, placing, too, the cool, grateful water against the smarting weals upon her arms. Afterwards she returned to her task, and went on polishing the metal lid, a sob still rising at intervals, to make Tim Ruggles flinch.

Tim's work was again in hand, but progressing very slowly, as he sat musing to himself, and wondering whose child the little one was; whether she would be fetched away—a proceeding which he dreaded, in spite of the pain it gave him to see the girl suffer.

"I've no spirit to stop it," he muttered, "though it nips me horribly. I suppose it's from stitching so much that I aint like most men. It's all right, though, I s'pose—she knows best. Here, I say, though, my wig and pickles, we shall have the missus home directly," he cried, fiercely, "and no work done. Now, then, bustle—polish away!"

And he set the example for work by snatching up the trousers in course of making, and working more fiercely than ever.

CHAPTER V.—ORGANIC.

A BUSY DAY at St. Runwald's. Mrs. Nimmer, the pew-opener, with a clean cap, like a white satin raised pie. Mr. Purkis, the beadle—of "Purkis's shoe emporium," in private life—in full uniform and dignity. He had cuffed Ichabod Gunnis, the organ-blower, for spinning his top in the porch, and sent that young gentleman howling up the stairs leading to the loft, where he thrust off his big charity-boy shoes, and stole down again in his soft, speckled-grey worsted stockings, to where, from a darkened corner, he could catch sight of his portly enemy, and relieve his mind by turning his back, doubling down and grinning between his legs, distorting his face after the fashion of the corbels of the old church, the tongue being a prominent feature as to the effect. For quite five minutes Ichabod showed his utter contempt for the church dignitary in question, who was all the time in a brown study, calculating the amount he would probably receive by way of what he called "donus," upon the appointment of a new organist; a train of thought interrupted by the consideration of the verses he should distribute at the coming Christmas, the last set having been unsatisfactory, from having been used by the beadle of the neighbouring parish, "a common man and low."

But there was soon an interruption to this second train of thought, for people began to congregate, and he had to lend his aid to Mrs. Nimmer, and assist the worthy old lady in imprisoning the new-comers in the big old pews, where, if they could not see, they would at all events be able to hear, this being the day for the organ competition.

People assembled under the impression that they were about to hear something grand, eight competitors having been selected from a very host of applicants; for the post, without taking into consideration

the fifty pounds per annum, was one of honour, St. Runwald's being a famous organ.

Through the influence of his medical friend—only a slight return on that gentleman's part, for Jared had been a good friend to him—the Clerkenwell music cobbler, as he called himself, was one of the select, and now sat in nervous guise where the vicar and churchwardens were assembled to elect the new organist.

Eight competitors, with testimonials to prove that though there might have been Mozarts, Beethovens, and a long roll of worthy names in harmony, yet there never had yet lived such able, such enthusiastic musicians as Edward Barrest, Mus. Doc., Oxon.; Philip Keyes, Mus. Doc., Cantab.; Herr Schtopffz, Handel Smith, R.A., and Corelli Sweller. There were other names read, but Mr. Timson, the vicar's churchwarden, stumbled over them, so that Jared Pellet could not catch them; but his ear-drum vibrated when his own was given out, and he shivered horribly. There were stout and important men, and men thin and insignificant, but conspicuous for his shabby aspect was Jared Pellet.

The testimonials did not have their due weight; for the vicar's churchwarden, Mr. Timson, a short, stout, peg-top style of man, a tea-dealer, threw himself into a violent perspiration by trying to keep each man's papers separate as he turned them over and over, with a peck here and peck there, then laid them in heaps, just as if he were sorting tea papers for pounds, halves, and quarters; and at last, what with confusion and his formidable double eyeglass—which was rather weak in the back, and given to shutting up when it should have kept open—he got himself into such a knot that he did what was best for him under the circumstances—handed the paper chaos over to his brother official, who hurriedly put on his gold-rimmed spectacles and did not read a word.

The vicar, a ruddy, genial old man, then read aloud, for the benefit of those in the vestry, the list of the candidates.

"And now then, gentleman," he said, "preliminaries being adjusted and matters in train, we will proceed to the organ."

"We" meant the candidates; for the vicar took possession of a pew, where he looked very much out of place, seeing that reading desk and pulpit were both empty; and then there was a little bustle and confusion in the old church, as Jared slowly and with sinking heart followed the great musicians to the organ loft, from whence he could see Mrs. Pellet, Patty, and a pewful of little Pellets, anxiously waiting "to hear father play."

"Ten minutes each, gentlemen," said the vicar loudly, from below; when the Oxford doctor's name being first upon the list, he took his seat. Ichabod Gunnis loudly moistened his hands and bent to his task, pulling up the bellows beam, and then sprawling across it to bear it down again with his own weight. Then, unrolling a piece of music, the doctor informed those around that it was his own composition, and played it in a most admirable manner.

But the effect of the doctor's composition was spoiled; for just in the midst of the finest *forte*, Ichabod Gunnis had fished a "boxer" top from the pocket of his yellow leather tights, and, lost in ad-

miration of its peg, forgotten his task, slackened his efforts, so that the wind failed in the chest, and, in place of a series of grand chords, there came from the old organ such doleful howls, as of a dying tune, that the organist thrust the fingers that should have been upon the keys into his hair, and grinned at himself in the reflector like a musical fiend.

"Try again," whispered a competitor, loftily.

And the Oxford man again played his piece; but though he got through it this time, the doctor felt that, unless his testimonials told strongly in his favour, his had been a fruitless journey that day.

Then came the Cambridge doctor, with a noble march, which brought forth murmured applause from those who listened. Then followed Handel Smith, who confined himself to the works of his great namesake, and now won plaudits, softly given, for his masterly performance of the great "Hallelujah Chorus."

As the last performer left his seat, Jared glanced down into the church, where, amidst the fast increasing audience, and occupying the most prominent place he could secure, stood Richard Pellet, with his thumbs in the armholes of his white vest, as he leaned back in portly guise against the pew front, and frowned acceptance of the last man's musical incense, which he seemed to consider entirely in his own honour. But now he caught sight of Brother Jared, and, as eye met eye, Richard's frown deepened, and his bottom lip protruded, as he appeared contemptuously to say—

"Some people are such fools!"

At all events, Jared Pellet seemed to feel the words, and thought them true. He glanced round the church, as if seeking an opportunity to escape from the moral custody in which he found himself; but there was refreshment for him in the bright eye of Patty, and an encouraging smile from Mrs. Pellet at her side.

The competition progressed. The churchwarden in spectacles gave vent to his opinion that Herr Schtopffz—a gentleman who appeared to be all fair hair and cheeks—almost made the organ speak; while, in their turns, the other competitors played admirably. A buzz of conversation ensued, as people warmly discussed the merits of the various performers; the churchwardens looked at one another, as if to say, "What next?" and Mrs. Pellet and her daughter began to fidget in their seats, both impatient for Jared to begin, since it had been their decided opinion that he should have played first.

But the buzz of conversation went on, and then as suddenly ceased; for the vicar rose in his pew, and exclaimed loudly—

"Another candidate yet, gentlemen—Mr. Jared Pellet."

CHAPTER VI.—JARED'S PIECE.

FOR the last half-hour Jared had been wishing himself in Duplex-street, and for the last five minutes he had indulged in a hope that he would be passed over and forgotten. But as his name was uttered he started, and mechanically left his seat, while Patty turned pale, and Mrs. Pellet had what she afterwards described as a rising sensation in her throat.

Anything but a formidable competitor seemed Jared Pellet, as he rose from his seat, gazing with a lost and wandering look around the old church, and wiping the perspiration from his brow; till what with abject looks, want of confidence, and his anything but bright costume, poor Jared's aspect was pitiable to an extent that made one of his brother's feet work as if wanting to kick something.

After the first glance, the audience resumed their conversation, and the rival candidates, as they made common cause against their opponent, raised their brows, tightened their lips, and shrugged their shoulders, especially Herr Schtopffz, who quite covered his ears as he took a pinch of snuff.

Jared gave one more glance round the church, as if he expected a miracle to be performed in his favour, and then stepped slowly towards the vacant seat, rubbing his long bony fingers together, so that they crackled again. The appearance of the organ was enough to make him approach it reverently; but he shuffled on to the stool, pressing down the lowest pedal key as he passed, so that it gave forth a deep shuddering grumble. This mishap seemed to add to his confusion, which, however, culminated as he felt in his pocket for the roll of music from which he was to have played. He felt in the next pocket, then in his breast, and lastly looked in his hat, as if expecting to see it there. Then he gazed in the faces of his fellow candidates, as if to say, "What's become of it?" But the roll was not forthcoming; and in despair, he now glanced at himself in the glass reflector above the keyboard. But nothing was to be seen there but a doleful, hopeless-looking face, as he felt that every trust in the chance of success was gone.

But as Jared sat there, in full view of the whole church, he felt a slight vibration of his seat, and heard the air rushing into the wind-chest as the boy toiled on at his task—to keep it filled, and make no more mistakes; for already in anticipation he was suffering from a cut or two of Beadle Purkis's cane.

Jared gazed up at the towering pipes above his head, then down at the keys and stops on either side; and then seemed to come over him the recollection of many a pleasant practice in a dim old church, where he had forgotten the troubles of the present in the concord of sweet sounds he had drawn from the instrument. He grew more agitated, his hands trembled, his cheeks flushed, and his eyes brightened; his whole form seemed to dilate; and he thrust his long fingers through his hair, as if seeking to add to the oddity of his appearance, while the audience ceased their murmuring hum of conversation as they witnessed his strange gestures.

He pulled out a stop here, and a stop there, tenderly, and as if caressing something he loved, or that something holy had touched; bent over the keys as though, recalling who had been his teacher, he would have kissed them. Then pushing off his boots, he thrust in every stop, seized them sharply, to draw nearly all out, and then struck so wild and thrilling a chord that his hearers started, and craned forward to catch the next note.

Now there was silence, save the dying vibrations of the chord heard in the distant corners and groin-

ings' of the roof, for not a whisper was heard amongst the many listeners assembled.

Still silence, as Jared Pellet sat motionless before the great instrument, while you might have counted thirty, for the player was lost in the crowd of recollections the sounds had evoked from the past. Competition, the audience, all had faded from his mental vision as once more he leaned forward, and fingers were held up to command silence where something unusual was instinctively expected.

"He's a lunatic, sir," said one of the churchwardens to a friend, as Jared Pellet again bent over the keys.

"Then I should like to be at a concert of such lunatics, sir," answered his friend, who then gave forth an audible "Hush!" as in a rapid, rolling passage the huge pedal pipes thundered forth a majestic introduction, when again for a few moments there was a pause, and the organist's fingers were held crooked in mid-air, till with a spasmodic effort he brought them down upon the keys, to pour forth crashing volley after volley of wondrous chords, from end to end of the keyboard, and with the full power of the mighty instrument.

Again a rest, and again crashing forth with wondrous rapidity came the soul-thrilling passages, till with suppressed breath the listeners leaned forward as though overpowered; while, after another slight pause, came wailing and sobbing forth so sweetly mournful, so heavenly a strain, that there were those present who were moved to tears, and two, seated in a pew surrounded by children, joined hands and listened with bended head. So sweet an air had never before pealed through the old aisles of St. Runwald's, and made to tremble the woodwork of the great pews with which it was disfigured; for now the melody was wild and piercing, now subdued and plaintive, to rise soon after to the jubilant and hopeful: it was the soul of the true musician pouring forth, through the medium of the divine art, its every thought and feeling.

Again a pause, and the seven rivals, with parted lips, eagerly clustered round the man who saw them not—who ignored church, audience, self, everything but the majestic instrument before which he was seated; and again and again, although the ten minutes had long expired, the audience listened to the bursts of harmony which swayed them as one man, floating around until the air seemed quivering and vibrating with the songs of a multitude of Heaven's own choristers. Louder and louder, chords grander and more majestic, then softly sweet and dying away; while, after one sweeping crescendo passage, Jared ended with a mighty chord which no other man could have grasped, and the audience seemed to be released from the spell which had bound them, as, stop by stop and key by key, the chord was diminished, until the pedal key-note alone vibrated shudderingly through the church.

"Rather warm work that, sir," said the little churchwarden, leaning over into the vicar's pew.

"Hush, Timson!" said the vicar—"he has not done."

But he had, though for a few minutes there was a silence that no one cared to break, till, forgetful of place—everything but the strains they had heard—

from the vicar downwards, all joined in one loud burst of applause; while dull, lustreless, spiritless, Jared Pellet responded to the congratulations of his rivals—one and all too true lovers of their art to withhold the palm where they felt it to be well-deserved.

Down in the nave, too, there was a pompous, bustling man, talking loudly to those around, giving people to understand that the organist was his brother—the man who without hesitation was elected to the post; and for once in a way Richard Pellet went and shook hands with Jared, and forgot to tell him that he was a fool.

CHAPTER VII.—MY DUTY TOWARDS MY NEIGHBOUR.

"NOW, then," said Tim Ruggles, "we mustn't have no more sobbing and sighing, you know; but get on with working, and eddication, and what not, before some one comes home and goes off. Now what were we doing last, my pretty?"

"Reading," said little Pine, absently.

"Mistake," said Tim. "It was cate—cate—Well, what was it?"

"Chism," said the child—"catechism."

"Right," said Tim. "Now, let's see; it was duty towards my neighbour, and if we don't look sharp as a seven-between we shall never get through that beautiful little bit. Eddication, my pretty, is the concrete a-top of which they build society; and if I'd been an eddicated man, and known a few things—"

"But you know everything, don't you?" queried Pine.

"Well, no, my dear, not quite," said Tim, rubbing one side of his nose, and gazing in a comical way at the child.

"But you are very clever, aint you?"

"Oh, dear me, no—not at all," said Tim; "leastwise, without it's in trousis, and there I aint so much amiss. But come, I say, this won't do; this is catechism wrong side out, so go on."

Then slowly on, to the accompaniment of the metal polishing, and the sharp click of Tim's needle, the portion of catechism under consideration progressed, till it was brought to a full stop over the words "Succour my father and mother," when Tim was, to use his own words, quite knocked off his perch by the child's question—

"Who is my mother?"

"Why—er—er—why, mother, you know," replied Tim.

The child shook her head thoughtfully, and now speaking, now stopping to rub at the bright metal, said—

"No, no!—not her, not her! My own—my own dear mother could not, would not beat me so. I think it must be some one who comes when I'm half asleep, and I can see her blue eyes, and feel her long curls round my face when she kisses me, and then it is that I wake up. And," she continued, dreamily, "I'm not sure whether she does come, for she is not there then, and when I whisper no one answers; and, do you know, whether she comes, or whether I think she does, that must be my mother, for no one else would come and kiss me like that."

"Why, I do," remonstrated Tim—"lots o' times."
 "Yes, yes, you do," said the child, smiling; "but I know when it's you, and I can't help thinking—"
 "Here, I say," exclaimed Tim, "this isn't catechism. This won't do, my pretty, you musn't talk like that. Now, then, go on—'succour my father'—"



"Succour—succour," continued the child, "my father and mother. Is she gone to heaven, and does she come to look at me by night and kiss me? I don't think that she would whip me so, and—and—Oh, pray don't be angry with me. I can't help it. Oh! I can't help it."

And then once again the little thin hands were pressed upon the quivering lips, to thrust back the bitter, heart-wrung wail that would make itself heard. No child's cry; but the moaning of a bruised heart, forced and rendered premature in its feelings by the long course of cruelty to which it had been subjected. A stranger might have listened, and then have gone away believing that his feelings had been moved to pity by the anguished utterances of a woman in distress.

Tim leaped from his board, half bewildered, and quite in trouble, to kiss and caress the child, smoothing her hair, patting her cheeks, and holding her tightly to his breast.

"Come, my pretty," he whispered, "you mustn't, you know. It does hurt so, and aint I as good as a father, and didn't you promise me as you'd love me very very much? And now you're raining down tears, and melting all the sugar out of a fellow's nature till you'll make him as cross as— Polish away, my pretty."

With two bounds Tim was back in his place, and little Pine bending over her task; for there was a heavy step upon the staircase, and as it stopped at the door Tim grunted, and slowly shuffled off his board to replace his iron in the fire, after giving it a loud clink upon the stand.

"Now, my dear," said Tim, loudly, "we aint getting on so fast as we oughter. Bear no malice."

"Bear no malice," repeated the child, looking at him with a quaint smile upon her little pinched lips.

"Nor hatred in my heart," said Tim, and then dolefully—"why don't you look at your work?"

"Nor hatred in my heart," said the child, whose little face, then again upturned, showed that if there were truth in looks, malice nor hatred had never entered her breast.

"Louder, ever so much," whispered Tim; "and don't yer get whipped whilst I'm at Pellet's, there's a pet. Keep my hands from picking and stealing," said Tim.

"From picking and stealing," said the child, softly.

"She'd better, that's all I can say," came from the doorway. And as Mrs. Ruggles closed the portal, and then swung round again, right about face, and confronted her husband, "Perhaps some one else will keep his tongue from evil speaking, lying, and so on."

"I'm blessed!" muttered Tim, "that's rather hot."

"Of course it is," exclaimed Mrs. Ruggles, who only caught the latter part of the sentence, and applied it to the fire. "Such waste of coals. I suppose that girl's been shovelling them on as if they cost nothing."

"No, my dear—me—it was me," said Tim, who well enough knew that the fire had been made up by Mrs. Ruggles herself. But he was a terrible liar.

"Then you ought to have known better."

"Yes, my dear," said Tim, humbly, glad to have averted the current of his lady's wrath.

"Are those trousers nearly done?" said Mrs. Ruggles.

"Very nearly, my dear," said Tim, throwing his iron-duster and some more scraps over the spot where lay the doll.

"Because you have to go to Pellet's, mind, this afternoon."

"Thinking about 'em when you was on the stairs, my dear," said Tim.

And this time he spoke the truth.



CHAPTER VIII.—ST. RUNWALD'S.

THERE were grand rejoicings in Duplex-street when Jared obtained official announcement, under the hand and seal of Mr. Timson, the tea-

dealer, of his appointment to the post of organist of St. Runwald's, with a salary of fifty pounds a year. To be sure, it was settled before; but Mrs. Jared said they might run back, and after the many disappointments they had had in married life, it was dangerous to reckon on too much. But now that there was an official appointment in Mr. Timson's round, neat calligraphy, she had no words to say save those of thankfulness.

Proud? Ay, he was proud, was Jared; for that was an organ to be proud of. It was none of your grand new instruments, full of stops, bearing a score of unaccountable names, miserably naked, skeleton-looking instruments, like a conglomeration of Pandean pipes grown out of knowledge, and too big for the society of their old friend, the big drum—beggarly painted affairs, with pipes in blue, and red, and white, after the fashion of peppermint sticks of the good old times—the old peppermint sticks, all sugar, and a flavour guaranteed for diffusion in a radius of fifty yards of the eater—none of your crimped and crooked double fashions, till the tubes looked as awkward and elbowish as the chimneys of an ill-built house. Why, I hardly believe that Jared, unless prompted thereto by the wolf Poverty, would have struck one of the mighty chords upon them.

But there would have been nothing surprising in Jared's refusal, since he played upon a noble organ in a dark wood case, one which grew richer of tint year by year, while the carved fruit and flowers that clustered around pipes, reflector, music-stand—in fact, wherever a scrap of carving could be placed—were worthy of inspection, without taking into account the shiny Ethiopic cherubs that perched upon their chins and spread their wings at every available corner. Finely-formed cherubs they were, too, whose colour and cheeks gave them the appearance of being wooden effigies of Æolus, Zephyrus, or Boreas, though their aspect might also have been ascribed to their proximity to the huge pipes and wind-chest.

No; Jared's was no common organ, as would be declared by any one who had seen the huge pipes towering up into the gloom of the roof, and their gilding shedding a rich sunset hue into the farthest corners of the old church. People came for miles to hear that organ as soon as Jared became its ruling spirit, and Mrs. Nimmer grew hot on Sunday mornings in her endeavours to find sittings for the strangers who flocked to be placed. But the old vicar, the Rev. John Grey, used to chuckle and think that all was due to his sermons, and wonder whether there could ever be a second St. Chrysostom, the golden-mouthed.

But Purkis, the beadle, used to wink—that is to say, he would draw a heavy lid over one of his lobster eyes, and say, "He knew!" For Jared, in spite of his poverty and large family, had commenced his musical reign by a "donus" of three half-crowns to the beadle, who would boast that he (the beadle) could give people a better service than they could get in any other church in London, and "as to the organ, why they'd better come and see, that's all."

And truly it seemed that Jared could make that

instrument thrill beneath his touch till every passion of the human heart had its representative amongst those notes. You might hear it sob, and wail, and moan in the most piteous manner, whisper and die away in sweet, sighing melodies amongst the old pillars, or far up in the carven corners of the chancel, where the notes made the glass to tremble in the lead, as they seemed striving to pass through the painted windows. Hear it thunder, too, like a young earthquake, and rage, and roar, and growl, till the very pew doors rattled and chattered; and, however thick and soft your cushion, you could feel the deep-toned diapasons shuddering up and down your spine. There were love, sighs, joy, rage, contending armies, the warring elements, with the rolling billow and crashing thunder, all to be heard from those organ pipes when Jared Pellet touched the keys; and matters grew to such a pitch that, partly out of pity for Ichabod Gunnis, and partly because people would not be played out, Mr. Timson limited Jared's voluntaries to a duration of ten minutes.

Mr. Purkis's dinner grew cold; but he did not mind it, for he loved music, and would sit, with mouth open and eyes upturned, feasting upon the sweet sounds which floated upon the air; but Mrs. Nimmer, who was not musical, and who, alternately with Mr. Purkis, locked up the church, did mind. Hints were of no use: the people would stop, while Ichabod Gunnis heartily wished that he might do the same; for it was a close and confined space where he laboured at the handle of his wind-pump until Jared's afflatus had been dispersed.

But Mr. Timson stopped all this with his ten minute law—ample time as he said; and as Jared Pellet never thought of opposing anybody, the voluntaries were reluctantly brought to an end. For, paradoxical as it may sound, Jared's behaviour at the competition was but a sample of his future, and when once he began to play, and the organ was in full burst, there was no Jared there, only his body see-sawing from side to side, with shoeless feet working at the pedals, and fingers, bony almost as the keys themselves, nimbly running from flat to natural and sharp, and back again. Jared was not there: he was in the spirit, soaring far away upon musical pinions, and in another state of existence, wherein he was freed from the cares and troubles of this life, and feeling them only indirectly as they affected others, with whom he seemed to weep or smile as the character of the music was grave or gay.

Jared Pellet had just finished a morning practice, for he had had to work hard to reduce his wild, semi-extemporised style to the requirements of a quaint choir. He had pushed in the last stop, and left his long stool, closing the organ with a sigh, before lifting the locker to his seat, and depositing therein book and MS. He had drawn the red curtains along the rod when he had entered, and on leaving drawn them back again, so that he stood confessed before Ichabod Gunnis; and for a stranger to see Jared Pellet stand confessed after one of his ethereal musical flights was like taking him from the seventh heaven and putting him under the pump. It was worse than going right into fairyland at the back of the stage on pantomime night, and staring dismayed at the dauby paint, canvas, and confusion.

That the being whose celestial music had thrilled through the hearer's frame? Yes, that quiet, shabby, worn man, who tuned pianos for half-a-crown, and carefully repaired every description of musical instrument.

Ichabod and the organist stood face to face, and whatever the failings of the latter, the former was no pattern of worldly beauty; for as to personal appearance, he had been rightly named, had there ever been any glory to depart; but the sole reason for the boy bearing his quaint cognomen was that, at the workhouse where he received his early gruel, the authorities had worn out the twelve patriarchs, and the twelve apostles, while the number of Abels, Davids, Solomons, and Jonathans who had left their walls was something startling, so they had tried Ichabod for a change, the Gunnis being an after addition, as will be explained.

Ichabod's leather breeches have already been delicately hinted at, but it has not been said that they badly fitted his fourteen-year-old limbs; neither have his blue bobtail coat and his vest, ornamented with pewter buttons, been mentioned—buttons bearing a large capital "G." There was no star of merit upon the left breast of Ichabod; but a pewter plate was stitched on close to his heart, to keep him from being smitten by the pity of those who saw his absurd garments, and also to act as a label, and to show that he was number fifty-five in the list of scholars belonging to that most excellent gift of charity—Gunnis's, which every one who knows London will tell you is a school where so many boys are educated, and made moral scarecrows; and Ichabod being a "fondling"—as he was called by the workhouse nurse—was by some means or other unknown entered at last, to the freedom of his parish, already overburdened, and became one of Gunnis's. "Six o'clock, Ichabod," said Jared, "and don't be late."

"No, sir," said Bod, as he was familiarly termed.

And then he began to spin his muffin cap by the tuft of coloured wool on the top.

"Don't do that, my boy, or you'll pull off the tassel," said Jared, as he prepared to descend the stairs, while the young gentleman addressed, evidently perceiving how disfigured his worsted cap would be without its red tuft, tossed it high in air, to nimbly catch it again upon his head, though rather too far over his ears for comfort of wearing. Then, listening to the descending footsteps, he threw off his coat, and went down upon the boards in a sitting posture; but not of the common kind, for though one leg was down in a normal posture, the other was stretched out far behind, so that it appeared as if the joint had been reversed.

Up again; and now one leg was tucked over his head, to the great danger of his leather pants; then the other leg was tucked over, and the boy down prostrate upon his chest, so that he wore the appearance of a dislocated frog, whilst his countenance beamed with satisfaction.

"Ichabod," cried Jared, from below.

"Comin', sir," shouted the boy, trying hard to untie himself, but in vain; although, after a couple more calls, he could hear the re-ascending steps of his employer. He twisted, he turned, he struggled,

but he was like a mouse in a wire-trap; it was easy to get into his present state, but return seemed impossible.

Higher came the steps, and the boy struggled again to free himself, till, just as Jared reached the door of the organ loft, the unpractised tumbler rolled over upon his back, and stared with upturned eyes over his forehead at the organist.

"Why, bless my soul!" exclaimed Jared, "what a dreadful contortion! The boy must be in a fit."

"No, I ain't," blubbered Bod. "I'm only stuck."

"Stuck!" exclaimed Jared.

"Yes—stuck," whimpered the boy. "Can't get my legs back, 'cause I've got shoes on."

"Stuck—shoes on!" repeated Jared in a puzzled way.

"Yes, sir," wept Bod; "and if you'll pull down one, I can do t'other myself."

Jared stared at the imp for a few minutes, as if he took him for a sort of human treble clef; then seizing the uppermost leg he set it at liberty, and the boy reduced himself to ordinary proportions, and stood erect, with one arm raised ready to ward off the expected blow.

"How dare you play such tricks as that in the church, sir?" cried Jared. "Suppose that you had become fixed like that—what then?"

Ichabod evidently did not know "what then," so he did not say, but snivelled, and rubbed one eye with the cuff of the coat he was about to put on.

"There, go on down first," said Jared, smiling grimly to himself; "and mind and be punctual, there's a good boy."

The good boy, now that the danger was past, went down grinning, when away he darted out of the porch, forgetting in less than five minutes all that had been said to him respecting the practice.

CHAPTER IX.—JARED'S DREAMING.

JARED'S must have been a more than usually patient disposition; for the same evening he arrived at the church at the appointed hour, to find that Ichabod had not come; nor did he make his appearance when his master had opened the organ and seated himself to wait, and gaze dreamily in the old reflector before him.

Not the first time, this, that Ichabod had failed; but Jared Pellet had spent the whole of his life accommodating himself to circumstances; and now, as had often before been his wont, he gave unbounded freedom to his thoughts. The mirror before him was dim, for the night was closing in, and, besides, the old church was always in a state of twilight from the stained glass windows; but, as he looked, he could just distinguish the pulpit dimly shadowed forth, and the screen before the chancel. But soon these seemed to fade from the reflector, and Jared was gazing upon the scenes of his early life—scenes now bright, now shadowed—and they passed rapidly before him, as if actually mirrored in the glass: the day that his brother and he were left orphans; their school days, when he was always fag and slave; scene after scene—scene after scene. That mirror had grown to be Jared's opium—his one indulgence; and, seated alone in the dark church, he would go on dreaming of the past and building up fancies of the

future, until it had become a habit that it was not easy to shake off.

Time had glided on since he obtained the appointment and its salary, so large in prospect, but so small when applied in practice to the wants of a large family.

But there was a strange life history to be read in that reflector, as Jared dreamed on, time after time; recalling his first severe illness, and its following weakness for many months, solaced by the attentions of the usher's little girl, to whose house he had been removed from school. Here it was that he had laid the foundation of his dreamy future, as he read aloud to his companion those old, old stories, and his eye kindled at the deeds of the Seven Champions, or he pictured adventurous Robinson Crusoe in his desert isle.

And this was a pleasant oasis in his life-journey, in spite of suffering and long weary months, during which he never left his reclining position, succeeded by a long sojourn in a London hospital; and all from an unlucky blow given by his tyrant brother.

Dreams many in that old church—of early manhood, and years passed as usher in his old school, while his brother was prospering in town; his love for his old playmate, Lizzie, and the bar of prudence which stayed their marriage; the failure of the school, and his efforts to gain a living by teaching music, eked out by the trifling salary he obtained as organist of the little town church—an accomplishment taught by love, for Lizzie Willis had been his teacher, and now gave up the duty in his favour.

At such an hour as this, back, too, would float the times when he had leaned against some old pew listening to her who played, or slowly learned the mysteries of the grand old instrument.

Floating before him always, scene after scene; his application to his brother for help when he first reached London in search of a more lucrative post; the refusal, and subsequent rage of Richard when he found that Jared, the despised, had married the woman who but a short time before had rejected him—Richard, the prosperous. Then they were in London, and, somehow, happy in their struggle—even though on the second day after their arrival the bankruptcy of a firm threw Jared out of the employment he had gained.

He recalled, too, his despondency over the disappointment, and then his determination to fight it out; how that, struggling on, he had procured a tuning job here, and some repairing there; now taught a little, and now obtained a commission to purchase some instrument; and, one way and another, earned a living, in spite of the way in which Mrs. Jared used to look upon him as a sort of human camel, and added to his burden year after year with the greatest of punctuality; and still his back was not broken, though twins must have been fatal, and he told her so.

A few chords, if the boy was there—a few deep vibrating chords that went echoing round the church, or a few rattlings of the keys if Ichabod came not, and Jared would be dreaming of the past.

CHAPTER X.—PATTY'S MISTAKE.

MATTERS wore a rather serious aspect at Duplex-street, though for a whole month Jared had enjoyed all the sensations known only to the wealthy. He had been congratulated by his family, who looked upon him as a sort of musical god, or as at least a musician worthy of ranking with those fiddling and trumpet-blowing angels they had seen once, upon a holiday, smiling benignantly in a cloudy heaven upon the ceilings at Hampton Court Palace. He had been congratulated, too, by his brother, who invited him to dinner, and then put him off twice—ending, though, by announcing his marriage with the wealthy Mrs. Clayton, widow of a merchant captain, and desiring that bygones might be bygones, and that Jared, his wife and daughter, would spend the afternoon and dine with them at Norwood on Christmas Day. Jared had said "No," but Mrs. Jared "Yes;" for, even if it spoiled their own homely day, no opportunity ought to be passed over which promised reconciliation between the brothers—for whose estrangement her woman's tact told her she was partly to blame.

So arrangements were made for the flock in Duplex-street, a neighbour—no less a personage than Mrs. Purkis—of Purkis's Shoe Emporium—undertaking to be shepherdess for the occasion. Clothes were compared, and what Mrs. Jared called made the best of, Jared himself devoting quite an hour to the brushing and nap-reviving of his old black coat and trousers. Many an old scrap of half-forgotten finery was routed out by Mrs. Jared for her embellishment, after long discussions; while as for Patty, when did a fair, open-countenanced young girl look otherwise than well in virgin white, even though it was but a cheap book-muslin, made up at home, with very little regard to fashion.

At the appointed hour a cab deposited the party from Duplex-street at the door of Richard's little place, at which door they arrived after a drive along a gritty gravel sweep. The stout and gentlemanly butler was there, and received them with frigid courtesy, two doors being flung open by as many gentlemen in drab and coach lace, which tall parties indulged in a laugh and a wink behind their hands at the expense of Jared; though number one—the under butler—afterwards told number two—the footman—that the "gal wasn't so very bad."

And now the brothers had met, and Jared, the poor, been introduced by Richard, the rich, to his wife, late wealthy widow of Captain Clayton, of the merchant service.

There was another introduction, though, performed by Mr. Richard Pellet in a condescending fashion, that brought something of a flush into the face of one present—namely, Harry Clayton; who, however, seemed to forget all the next moment, as he made his stepfather frown upon seeing the attentions paid by the frank, handsome young undergraduate to his blushing niece. Jared, too, felt troubled; he did not know why, for he dwelt with pleasure upon the young man's face, as it shone in opposition to the stepfather's scowls.

The conversation rose and flagged; but it was evident to Jared that there was a cloud overshadow-

ing the meeting, though the young man heeded not the glances of father and mother, as he chatted on to the fresh, happy girl at his side.

Doubtless, to a grandee of the London season Patty would have seemed slow and backward in conversation; but to the young undergraduate there was something fascinating in the naïve, ingenuous girl; and in spite of looks, hints, and even broad remarks, which turned Jared's morocco-covered chair into a seat of thorns, Harry laughed and chatted on through the dinner.

There was everything at Norwood for the spending of a pleasant evening—everything, with one exception. There was what Jared called in confidence to his wife "the fat of the land;" but though the said fat was well cooked and served, and there were luscious wines to wash it down, yet was there no geniality—the warm welcome which makes the poor man's joint a rich feast was not there, and the visitors partook of portions of their meal in the midst of a chilly but exceedingly well-bred silence.

Jared was not at home, and he could not help flinching from the ministrations of the men in coach lace, while he felt quite hot when the gentlemanly butler asked him in stern tones if he would take champagne.

Not that conversation was entirely wanting on the part of the elders, for at times Jared listened to the thrilling narrative of his brother's speculations, and of how much money he had made; learned something new—what a fine thing cash was, how powerful it made its owner, and how he enjoyed its possession. Then Richard pitied kindly Jared's want of business tact, hinted how much more might have been made had both been business men, and concluded by wishing him better days, and drinking his health in a glass of port—a port purchased at Mr. Humphrey Phulcrust's sale, so he informed Jared—at one hundred and twenty shillings a dozen; Jared thinking the while that it was very strong and harsh, and flavoured of the sloes he had gathered as a boy, while a dozen of the ruddy fluid would have paid a quarter's rent in Duplex-street; so that altogether he quite trembled, and felt as if he were injuring his wife and family as he sipped and sipped like a man who was engaged in swallowing sixpences.

When Richard Pellet was not frowning upon his stepson, he was very active in promoting the comfort of his guests, after the same fashion in which he had flavoured his brother's wine—telling them how much port was in the soup, how much he paid for the turbot in Billingsgate, and how he gave a crown for the lobster. As for the turkey, that was five-and-twenty shillings, and bought on purpose for their coming. Many other things were equally expensive, so that Jared and his family thoroughly enjoyed the epicurean feast, thinking all the while of their own humble board, with the goose, brown and odorous, bought late, and consequently cheap, on the previous night; the plum pudding; and beady beer from round the corner. Home would keep rising to his mind; so that, before the dinner had half dragged through its slow length, Jared was wishing himself back in Duplex-street, playing at forfeits or blind man's buff with his tribe, watching the while that they did not meddle with any of his musical concerns.

Money and business—business and money, were Richard Pellet's themes, and on the golden string they formed when twisted he harped continually. But it was not only in speech that you felt the money, for it was peering out of everything, from the mistress of the house, with her massive gold chain and large diamond rings, down to the very carpet on which she trod. There were books in gilded bindings that had never been opened, a piano of the most costly kind that was rarely touched; there was every luxury that money could purchase; while there, the very essence of his cash—grey-headed, bushy, and prominently-browed, very smooth and glossy, and always chinking a few sovereigns in either pocket—was Richard Pellet, looking down with a pleasant, patronizing smile of contempt upon his guests.

"Some people are such fools!" he seemed to mutter to himself, as he pitied poor, comely Mrs. Jared, who appeared to be neither surprised nor disappointed, but took all with a quiet, well-bred ease, and did not in the least allow stout Mrs. Richard to sit upon her—metaphorically, of course—in spite of her violent flame-coloured moiré; neither did she seem to be crushed by the conversation, which varied little between the weather and the dinner.

The repast might have been full of constraint for the elders; but to Patty it was a scene of enjoyment, for Harry Clayton, awake now to their meaning, laughed at his mother's remonstrant looks, and, ignoring those of Richard, was more than ever attentive to the bright-eyed girl, who, in her light-hearted innocence, chatted merrily with him, listening eagerly to his accounts of college life—both thinking nothing of the wealth around in the enjoyment of each other's society.

It was, of course, very provoking; but, in spite of all hints to the contrary, now that they were in the drawing-room, Harry would linger by Patty's chair. "Would she play?" Yes, she would play. "And sing?" Yes, and sing, too. The first skilfully; the latter in a sweet little silvery, gushing voice that was bird-like from its purity and freedom from affection. For Patty was Jared's own child, with her father's love for music—the art which he had loved to teach her, at times, too, when often and often called away to perform some simple domestic duty.

Richard Pellet seemed surprised, and listened in silence. Mrs. Richard forgot herself so far as to clap her hands, and call Patty "a dear little darling." But, gazing upon the group at the piano with the eyes of her lord, she felt that this sort of thing would not do. Apparently, too, acting upon a hint from Richard, she kept framing blundering excuses for keeping the young man near her—excuses, though, so trivial, that Harry only laughed good-humouredly, and then made his way back to the young visitor's side.

It was nearly time for tea, and Harry had coaxed the artless girl into the little drawing-room, to show her some sketches, and the photographs of the elders. Jared and his brother had their backs to them, hard and fast in a discussion upon money—Richard telling his brother what a deal a sovereign would make; Jared the while in a state of doubt, from old experience of how short a way it went,

whether there really were as many as twenty shillings in a pound. As for Mrs. Jared, she was seated in a low chair by the fire, and being beamed upon by Mrs. Richard, who had exhausted the weather, finished the dinner, and was now at a loss for a fresh subject.

The sketches were very interesting, so much so that Harry was obliged to explain them in a low, subdued tone, when, taking advantage of their position, he, with a heightened colour, drew forth a sprig of mistletoe, and held it before Patty's eyes.

"No, no," she whispered in a low tone—so low that he probably did not hear it—"no, no; that is only for children."

"The licence of the season," Harry whispered, as with one hand he held up the sprig, and then drew towards him the yielding girl.

Well, Patty was very young, very natural, and quite unused to worldly ways; and Harry was somewhat rough and frank. Patty had listened to words new to her that night, and where her elders had seen but pride and ostentation she had had her eyes blinded by a *coulour de rose* veil, drinking deeply the while of the honied draught the young fellow in all earnestness pressed upon her.

All was sweet, and new, and delightful. He must mean all he said; while being Christmas time, with a scrap of the pearl-hung parasite to hallow the salute, how could she scream, or struggle, as was of course needful under the circumstances? Patty did not resist; for, being ignorant and natural, she thought—Oh, shame!—that she would like the salute, and so allowed her soft cheek to rest for a moment where it was drawn, while the little red, half-parted lips hardly shrank from the kiss they received.

"Harry!" roared Richard Pellet, leaping from his chair, for he had been seated opposite to a glass which betrayed every movement of the young people. "Harry!" he roared; and the young man, with eyes cast down, but raised head, stood erect and defiant before him. "Come here," he exclaimed, striding towards the door, while as the delinquent followed him from the room, Jared and his wife distinctly heard the words, "That beggar's brat!"

CHAPTER XI.—THE LOVER'S PETITION.

AN hour later and the party were back in Duplex-street, having travelled home in silence, with Patty weeping her sin the whole way, while now she sat sobbing by the fireside, almost heedless of her mother's consoling words. Jared had looked stern and troubled, but not cross; in fact, he had been talking the matter over to himself on the way back, and himself had had the best of the argument, by declaring that it was only a custom of the season; that Harry Clayton was a fine, handsome young fellow, and Patty as sweet a little girl as ever breathed; and that, though the matter had turned into an upset, Harry Clayton was not so much to blame.

Jared was beaten by himself—that is to say, by his own good-nature—and, what was more, he seemed so little put out in consequence, that he rode home the rest of the way with his arm round his wife's waist—but then, certainly, it was dark.

"There, there!" exclaimed Jared, at last, "go to bed, Patty, and let's have no more tears."

He spoke kindly; but Patty could not be consoled, for she told herself that she had been very, very wicked, and if dear father only knew that she had *almost* held out her lips to be kissed, he would never, never forgive her. So she sobbed on.

"Why, what is the matter?" exclaimed Jared, at last, for Patty had thrown herself on her knees at her mother's feet, and was crying almost hysterically in her lap. "What are you crying for?"

"Oh! oh! oh!" sobbed poor Patty, whose conscience would not let her rest until she had made a full confession of her sin, "I did—id—id—n't try to stop him."

"Humph!" grunted Jared.

And husband and wife's eyes met over the weeping girl, whose sobs after confession grew less laboured and hysterical.

The next day Harry Clayton called at Duplex-street, and the next day, and again after two days, and then once more after a week; but only to see Mrs. Jared, who never admitted the buccaneer beyond the door-sill. She was civil and pleasant, but he must call when Mr. Jared Pellet was at home, which he did at last, and was admitted to the front parlour.

Jared was in his shirt sleeves, and had an apron on; for he was busy covering pianoforte hammers, and there was a very different scent in the place to that in Mrs. Richard's drawing-room, for Jared's glue pot was in full steam.

Had Mr. Harry Clayton received permission from his parents to call? This from Jared, very courteously, but quite *en prince*, though his fingers were gluey.

No, from the young man, very humbly; he had neither asked nor received permission. But if Mr. Jared would not let him see Miss Pellet before he went, he should leave town bitter, sorrowful, and disappointed; for there had been a great quarrel at home, and though he was of age, Mr. Richard Pellet wished to treat him like a child.

Only a shake of the head from Jared, who was not a business man.

Would Mr. Jared be so cruel as to refuse to let him bid Miss Pellet good-bye?

Yes, Jared Pellet would, even though his wife had entered, and was looking at him with imploring eyes. For Jared had a certain pride of his own, and a respect for his brother's high position. And, besides, he told himself bitterly that it was not meet that the step-son of a Cræsus should marry with "a beggar's brat."

So Jared would keep to his word; and Mrs. Jared could only sympathize with the young man, holding the while, though—by a strange contradiction—with her husband.

(Who can understand women?)

But would they take his message to her—his dearest love, and tell her that he was going away to make a name before he came back; and that, come what might, she would always be his own bright, guiding star?

And then young Harry gave vent to a good deal more romantic, saccharine stuff of twenty-one vintage, interspersed with the sea-saltism of "true

as the needle to the pole," et cetera, et cetera—all of which, tending as it did to show his admiration for her daughter, and coming from a fine, handsome, and manly young suitor, Mrs. Jared thought very nice indeed, but she diluted its strength with a few tears of her own.

Jared was obstinate, though, and would not look; he only screwed up his lips, and covered pianoforte hammers at express speed, making his fingers sticky, and wasting felt; for every hammer had to be recovered when Harry had taken his departure.

But they would take the message; and then Harry was gone, with one hand a little sticky from Jared's gluey fingers as he said "Good-bye," and one cheek wet with Mrs. Jared's tears, as he saluted her reverently, as if she had been his mother.

"But a nice lad, dear," said Mrs. Jared, wiping her eyes.

"Yes, I dare say," said Jared, stirring his glue round and round; "but mighty fond of kissing."

Then husband and wife thought of the strange tie growing out of the new estrangement, and also of the fact that they must be growing old, since their child was following in their own steps—in the footprints of those who had gone before since Adam first gazed upon the fair face of the woman given to be his companion and solace in the solitude that oppressed him.

And where was Patty?

Down upon her knees in her little bed-room, whither she had fled on hearing that voice, sobbing tremendously, as if her little heart would break—her handkerchief being vainly used to silence the emotion.

And that message? Poor Mrs. Jared's lecture when she delivered it was all but useless; for the mother was quite disconcerted by the child's reproachful looks, when she told her that it might be but a passing fancy, that their position was so different, that years and distance generally wrought changes, and she must learn to govern her heart.

Just as if it were likely that such a man as Harry Clayton—so bold, so frank, so handsome, so—so—so—everything—could never alter in the least. So Patty cried, and then laughed, and said she was foolish, and then cried again, and behaved in a very extravagant way, hoping that Harry would write and tell, if only just once more, that he loved her.

But Harry did not write; for he was a man of honour, and he had promised that he would not till he had permission.

So Jared Pellet sat on, dreamily gazing in his reflector, hours sometimes after Ichabod had left him, and, seeing all this again and again, would think that he had acted justly and wisely; and Time was to be the prover of the young people's future. The breach remained wider than ever between the brothers; for Richard Pellet said grandly to his wife—standing the while with his back to the fire, and chinking sovereigns in his pockets—that it was quite impossible to do anything for people who were such fools, and so blind to their own interests; while Mrs. Richard, who was on the whole a good-natured woman, but had not room in her brain for more than one idea at a time, thought her new relatives very

dreadful people, for they had driven her poor boy away a month sooner than he would have gone, though in that part Richard Pellet did not show much sympathy, since he was rather glad to be rid of his step-son.

CHAPTER XII.—HOMELY.

A BUSY day in Duplex-street—in fact, most days were busy there—and Mrs. Jared and Patty in a state of bustle from morning till night. For, being a poor man's wife, Mrs. Jared had grown of late years to think that doing nothing stood next door to a sin, and consequently hard she worked, early and late.

But the day in question was a Saturday—a day upon which all the juveniles rose with sorrow in their hearts, since it was washing day. Not the washing day when the copper was lit in the back kitchen, and Mrs. Caley came to work with crimped hands by the day, making the house full of steam, and the cold mutton to taste of soap; but the day when there was a family wash of the little Pellets. Mrs. Jared's task had of late years grown to be rather heavy, the consequence being that she had become on her part more vigorous of arm and bustling of habit. Certainly, during these weekly lamb-washings there used to be a great deal of outcry—Mrs. Jared being the washer, and Patty undertaking the head-dressing, and finger and toe-nails of the smaller members, bringing to an end her part of the performance by carrying them up pick-a-back to bed like so many little sacks. But in consequence of numbers the first washed had of necessity to go very early to rest—a fact productive of much crowding and getting behind one another, the strongest in this case going to the wall, and thrusting the weaker before them in the pen where they were confined.

Mrs. Jared had been very busy all day—at least, what should have been all day—though, in consequence of a heavy fog, and the neutralizing lamp-light, it seemed to have been all night. Mrs. Jared had made a mistake that morning, and risen two hours before her customary time, the consequence being that cleaning matters were the same period of time in advance; and in place of the lavations taking place after tea, they were all over before, and the shining faces that had lately been screwed up were once more beginning to look happy and contented, though, by some strange fatality of their owners, they seemed to be always in Mrs. Jared's way.

Everything about the place shone clean and bright; the comfortable front kitchen was in order, and tea-time was near at hand, when Jared Pellet would descend with Tom Ruggles, grown by long working quite a friend of the family—coming for so much a day and his meals, and ready to do anything, from curtailing the goodly proportions of Jared's old trousers and making them up for smaller members of the family, and contriving caps out of waistcoats, to, in various ways, acting as a regular tailor-chemist in the new and useful combinations he could contrive for the little Pellets, of whom one never knew for certain how many Jared had, for if you tried to count them, there were always two or three fresh little heads peeping out at you from among

Mrs. Jared's skirts, like chicks from the wings of a hen.

Tea-time at last, and things in a satisfactory state of conclusion; though, as a matter of course, work was never ended in Duplex-street. Mother and daughter had taken it in turns to change gowns and to smooth hair; and Patty had made that pleasant, home-like, clinking noise familiar to every Englishman—one formed by the setting out of the cups and saucers, and the placing of the spoons in their normal positions.

"Ah-h-h! who is touching the sugar?" cried Mrs. Jared, in what was meant for the tone of an ogress; but from so pleasant-faced a little body, anything like an ogreish sound was out of the question.

But the voice had its effect; for a little plump, sticky fist was snatched from the sugar basin, though not without drawing with it the depository of sweets, when a large proportion of the sandy-looking necessary was thrown down upon the newly-swept piece of drugget, amidst a violent clattering of tea cups, and a buzz of small voices, as though a score of wasps had been attracted to the cloying banquet.

"Oh, my gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Jared, popping the baby down upon the old chintz-covered sofa—there always was a baby at Jared's—and then charging the culprit and a couple more who had gathered round the spoil—"Oh! my gracious; and Mr. Ruggles will be down directly to tea. Oh, Patty, why didn't you mind Totty? See what mischief she has been in, and here's Dicky with quite a handful now."

"She was here just this minute," cried Patty from the back kitchen, "and I did not miss her."

In fact it was rather hard work to mind Jared's progeny, which, from being confined in a small house, was exceedingly restless—climbing, falling, upsetting candles, burning themselves, cutting fingers, or rolling from the top to the bottom of the kitchen stairs, so that the rag-bag was always in requisition, and tied-up fingers, sticking-plastered or bruised heads and abrasions were matters of course.

"Totty yikes oogar," said the sticky cause of all the mischief, in treacly tones.

"Totty yikes oogar," exclaimed Mrs. Jared, angrily imitating her juvenile's limping speech, and forgetful that she herself had crippled the words while teaching the little one its first steps in language—"Totty's a very, very naughty girl, and ought to be well whipped."

And then the troubled dame busied herself in gathering up the spilled saccharine treasures with a spoon, while Totty elevated her chin to make the passage straight, and gave vent to a doleful howl, rubbing the while her sticky hands all over her clean face. Patty tried to look cross, because she had been scolded—an utter impossibility on account of the dimples in her cheeks, which looked as though a couple of kisses had been planted there by loving lips, and the downy, peachy skin had flinched with the contact, and never since risen—nursing up the sweet impressions and holding them as treasures of the past. Then numbers odd wept for sympathy, as Mrs. Jared scraped and scolded, heedless of the facts that the Dutch clock had given warning for

five, and that the tea was not yet made, the toast not cut, and the bloaters not down to cook. For as it had been a Saturday's dinner—i.e., scrappy—"snacks," in honour of Tim Ruggles, were in vogue for tea.

But troubles never come singly; for now the baby, having made up its mind to see what was the matter, contrived to wriggle about until its nine months' old bundle of soft bones, gristle, and flesh rolled off the sofa, bump on to the floor, where, as soon as it could get its breath, it burst forth into a wail of astonishment and pain at the hard usage it had received.

Patty rushed to seize the suffering innocent; Mrs. Jared with her skirts knocked down the origin of the mischief; the kettle boiled violently, and spat and sputtered all over the newly black-leaded grate and bright steel fender, adding as well a diabolical hydrogenous smell; while in the midst of the trouble down came Jared Pellet and Tim Ruggles, punctual to five o'clock, anxious to refresh themselves with the social meal.

"There—if I did not expect as much!" cried Mrs. Jared, snatching the kettle off the fire with one hand and hushing Totty with the other; rushing the children into their ready-set chairs, and Tim Ruggles into his place, Jared quietly taking his own by the fireside, where he could set his teacup on the oven top. Then Patty was busy toasting; the little Dutch oven, containing four "real Yarmouths, at two for three-halfpence," found its place, and sent forth a savoury odour; the tea was made, with two spoonfuls extra, and Jared was set to caress the sticky Totty now planted upon his knee.

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CHAPTER XIII.—TIM'S DITTY.



WHEN a few minutes had expired, that tyrant of the household, Jared's baby, had subsided into an occasional sob, and was given over into the care of one of Patty's juniors, both being well bread-and-buttered—the baby having a wedge in each hand—and sent up into the front room to amuse themselves, with strict orders not to touch.

The paraffin lamp was lit instead of a candle; the fire poked until it laughed in the face of the steaming kettle, which still snorted and spat a little in remembrance of the said fire's rudeness in wreathing its arms round her as she sat in its lap, so that she was compelled to boil over in wrath and indignation.

And now, after so many preliminaries, the meal was commenced—the tea being fragrant, the toast just brown enough, the butter better than usual, and the bloaters prime; while Totty declined to abdicate the throne she had ascended, one where she reigned supreme—her father's knee, to wit; and at last there was peace in the front kitchen in Duplex-street.

"Did you ever hear such a noise, Mr. Ruggles," said Mrs. Jared at last, her face now all smiles.

"Not my way often, ma'am," said Tim; "at least, that is—we do have noises."

Mrs. Jared looked significantly at her husband, and then sighed, when, after fidgeting in his chair, Tim said—

"A little more sugar, if you please, ma'am."

"Totty yikes oogar," exclaimed the chubby delinquent, displaying her sorrow for her late act of piracy by making a grab at the hard roe upon her father's plate—a delicacy but just set free from overlaying bones; but the plate was hot, and the little fingers suffered a sharp pang, when there was another outcry, but with that exception the meal progressed in peace to the end, when Jared threw himself back in his chair, and set himself to amuse Totty by turning his inflated cheeks into drums for that young lady to belabour with sticky fists.

But it was at supper time, when the little ones were in bed, and Jared and Tim had concluded their tasks, that there was the real peace. For now, upstairs by the fireside, a pipe was produced for Tim, and two weak glasses of gin and water were mixed—Mrs. Jared indulging in occasional sips from her

husband's portion; while, under the influence of his own, Tim grew communicative respecting his own home, and the present Mrs. Ruggles, and on Patty making some inquiry respecting little Pine, he would lay down his pipe, rub his hands softly together, and look very serious.

"For my part," said Mrs. Jared, "I don't hold with such sharp correction of children as you say Mrs. Ruggles administers."

Tim did not speak, but his eyes fell upon a small cane above the chimney-piece; but Mrs. Jared had seen his glance, and exclaimed—

"You need not look at that, Mr. Ruggles; for it is never used, only talked about—at least," she said, correcting herself, "very seldom. I don't think it right to be harsh to children, only firm; and if you begin with firmness they will never hardly require further correction."

"Spare the rod, spoil the child," said Tim, softly, exhaling a column of smoke.

"Stuff!" said Mrs. Jared, sharply. "Do you mean to say that my children are spoiled, Mr. Ruggles?"

"No, ma'am," said the little tailor, earnestly; "I never saw a better behaved family. Nor a bigger," he said to himself.

"But Solomon said so, my dear," observed Jared, drily.

"Then Solomon ought to have been ashamed of himself," said Mrs. Jared, tartly, "and it must have been when he was nearly driven mad by some of his own hundreds. He said plenty of good things, but I don't consider that one of them; and besides, with all his wisdom, he was not perfect. Between ourselves, I wonder, Mr. Ruggles, that you allow it. When the little thing came after you the other day, even her little neck was marked, and as to her arms—why, Patty went upstairs and cried about them. I'm only a plain-spoken woman, and really sometimes I wonder that you ever married again, and you must excuse me for saying so."

"I often wonder at it myself," thought Tim Ruggles, as he sat poking at his frizzy hair with the stem of his pipe, and looking very intently into his gin and water; all at once, though, he exclaimed—

"I'll tell you how it was!"

But before telling them how it was, he refilled and lit his pipe, sat thoughtfully for a few minutes, and then refreshed himself with a sip of weak gin and water.

"You see, ma'am," said Tim Ruggles, looking very mysterious, "that little one's name was Proserpine or Propserpine, I'm not sure which, unless I look at where we've got it written down. I'm not sure it aint Proserpine; but at all events it's a long awkward name, and we all took to calling her Pine. I married the present Mrs. Ruggles to take her in charge and mind her. And she does take care of her, and brings her up in the way she should go. You should hear her say catechism," said Tim, looking proudly at Mrs. Jared.

"I'd rather hear her say she loved her step-mother, Mr. Ruggles," said Mrs. Jared, quietly.

Tim was disconcerted, but not beaten.

"But she does, ma'am, and me too, wonderful; or Mrs. Ruggles is only just a little too strict, and I don't like to interfere; for you know, ma'am, that's

a child of mystery—that is, like Fatherless Fanny, as may-be you've read of; and no doubt she'll come to be in a big spear of life. She—that's Mrs. Ruggles, you know, ma'am—says that we'll do what's right by the child, ma'am; and what can I say against that, when Mrs. Ruggles is such a clever woman?"

"I don't quite like such cleverness," said Mrs. Jared.

"You see I want to do what's best, ma'am," said Tim, "and somehow that's rather hard sometimes. But I was going to tell you, ma'am, we used to live in South Molton-street, and, though I've no children of my own now, ma'am, when my poor first wife was alive there used to be one regularly every year, and the wife that proud of it she didn't know what to do for a few months; and then a time would come when we'd stand side by side looking at the little weeny, waxy features lying in the bit of a coffin, and the wife fit to break her heart because they were all taken away again so soon. Not one lived, ma'am; and though we were poor, and at times very much pushed for a job, and a little money, that used to seem to be our greatest trouble, and I've seen my poor wife look that hungry and envious of a lodger on the first floor, quite a lady she was, who lived alone there with her baby, that nothing could be like it.

"But she was a good woman, God bless her!" said Tim, in a low voice; and as he spoke he put his hand to his bald head as if raising his hat, "and sometimes I think, ma'am, that there aren't such a wonderful number of good women in this world. I never knew what money we had, and what money we hadn't; but used to put it into her hands as I brought it home from the shop, and I always knew that she'd make it go as far as money would go, and I didn't want no more. Nothing like letting your wife keep the purse, sir; always makes her feel proud of the confidence.

"But it came to pass at one time, ma'am, that we were so put to it that I couldn't put a bit of confidence in Mrs. Ruggles, ma'am—my first—for times were that hard with strikes that there was not a stroke of work to be got for anybody. We tried all we knew, and I scraped, and pledged, and sold, till it seemed that the next thing to do would be to go into the workhouse; when one day came a knock at our back room door, and we both started, feeling sure that it was to tell us we must go, for we were behindhand with the landlord. But no; who should come in but the first-floor lodger, with her little one; and, to make a long story short, what she wanted was for my lass to take care of her, and be paid for doing it.

"And do you think she would? Why, she snatched hungrily at the little thing; and, poor as we were, would have been glad to do it for nothing. Perhaps I had my objections, and perhaps I hadn't, ma'am; but we were almost starving, and when five pounds were put on the table for the present, and an address written down where we were to go when that money was done, why, one could only look upon it as a God-send, and promise all the poor lady wished.

"Then came the cruel time, ma'am, when the poor woman had to leave it, and I was glad to go out of the room, so as not to see her sobbing and breaking

her heart, and snatching the poor little baby to her breast and running to the door with it, and then coming back and giving it up to my wife—kissing her, and kneeling down to her, and begging of her to love it; when my poor lass was worshipping it as hard as ever she could.

"I stopped out of the room till she was gone, poor lady, and then I came back, pretending to look jolly; but I only made a fool of myself, ma'am, when I saw the wife crying softly over the little thing in her lap, for I knew what it all meant. Oh! so much, ma'am; for they were the tender motherly tears of a woman who had never been able to pour out all the love of her heart upon one of her own little ones. And, as I stood there, I seemed not to like to speak, as I saw her lips quivering and face working. But in spite of all her sad looks, there was one of pleasure in her face; for there was the little thing looking up, and crowing, and laughing, as if it knew that it was in good hands. And while my poor lass stayed on this earth, ma'am, no little one could have been more tenderly treated.

"But there came a time when I was anxious and worried, same as I had been often before; and then I couldn't believe it at all, and wouldn't have that it was true; for it all seemed like a dream, till I found myself sitting with little Pine in my arms, keeping her with me because she was something poor Lucy loved; and then it seemed to come home to me that it was my poor wife's cold smooth forehead that I had kissed, as she lay still and sleeping, with another little waxen image upon her breast; but it was all true, ma'am, and I was alone."

Poor Tim Ruggles made no secret of the fact that he was crying, as he laid down his pipe, and pulled out a thin red cotton handkerchief to wipe his eyes; and for some reason or another Patty's face was very close to her needlework, and Mrs. Jared had altered her position.

"Time went on," said Tim, continuing his narrative, "till one day I was sitting nursing the little thing, as took to me wonderful, when there came a sharp knock at the door, and in came the child's mother, to snatch it out of my arms, and kiss and fondle it as only mothers can. She seemed as if she couldn't speak, but held out one hand to me, and pressed mine, and tried to smile; but only gave me such a pitiful, woe-begone look, that it was quite sad to see.

"Then there were steps on the stairs once more, and the next moment there was a tall hard-looking woman, and a stout man in black, like a doctor, both in the room.

"Ellen!" said the tall woman, in a sharp cross sort of way, but the stout man was all fidgety, and nervous-like, and did not seem to know what to do; but he says, 'Hush! hush! don't let us have any scene here!'

"Let her come quietly with us, then," says the woman. But the poor thing only held little crying Pine to her breast, seeming in sore trouble that the child should not know her, but struggle and cry to get away. Then she gave me the child, and the man says, 'Take her away. Stop that crying child.'

"But I had no occasion to take her away, for she

stopped crying directly I took her; and besides, I wanted to see the end of a strange scene. And now it seemed just as if the little one's mother gave herself up like a prisoner to the tall woman, who took tightly hold of her arm, and then they hurried out of the room, the stout man all in a perspiration, and looking scared, and as if afraid I was going to interfere; and I would, too, only Pine's mother went so quietly, just kissing her hand to me and the little one as she left the room; and then I heard the steps on the stairs.

"I did not see any more; but one of the lodgers told me afterwards how they all went off together in a cab that was waiting at the door. And I never knew any more, only what I told you was the child's name, and that the money's paid regular by a lawyer for her keep; and nobody never asks any questions nor wants to know anything about her; and though I once tried, I can't find anything out. And excepting that I've ten shillings a week with her, she might be my own little girl.

"And what could I do without some one to help me, ma'am?" said Tim to Mrs. Jared. "I went four years with women to do for me, and housekeepers; and then I had the present Mrs. Ruggles, ma'am, who took so kindly to the child, that I thought it would be all for the best; and we moved to Carnaby-street, ma'am, and it took a deal of doing, but I married her. My sister's husband says she married me: perhaps she did, ma'am, I don't know; but it all seems to come to the same thing."

"And did you never see any more of the little thing's relations?" said Mrs. Jared, whose interest in the child seemed to increase.

"No, ma'am," said Tim, "never—never. Of course I felt a bit curious after that strange visit; but I was too full of my own troubles to do anything, and when some time after I said something to one of the lawyer's clerks, he asked me if I was tired of my job, because plenty more would be glad of it.

"That sent me out of the office like a shot, ma'am. It didn't matter to me that I heard the clerk laughing, for I'd sooner have given them ten shillings a week to let me keep her than have given her up. And I don't love her any the less now, ma'am; but I do sometimes wish she was away."

"The old story," said Jared; "they evidently don't want the little thing, and pay to keep it out of sight."

"Something more than the old story, sir, I think," said Tim, humbly. "There's something wrong about the poor mother, depend upon it, as well as the child."

"So I think, Mr. Ruggles," said Mrs. Jared, "and though perhaps I have no business to interfere, I cannot help saying again that I don't at all like the way in which it is treated, poor child. I don't think you ought to stand by and let it be beaten."

"Well, I don't know, ma'am—I don't know," said Tim, humbly. "I'm afraid to interfere, to tell you the truth; for I'm out a deal, and if I were to say much, I should only make Mrs. Ruggles the little thing's enemy. Really, ma'am, I try to do what's for the best; and I don't think if I tried ever so I should make any better of it. As I said, I almost wish sometimes that she was gone, but it always nips me afterwards; for somehow, ma'am, that child

seems to be all I have to love now, and you know how children will wind themselves round you, and make a home in your heart. I hope none of yours, ma'am, may know what it is to have a step—that is," said Tim, stammering, "—ever be—er—ever—ever—suffer, you know, ma'am."

Tim Ruggles hid his confusion in his red handkerchief as soon as he could prevail upon it to quit the depths of his pocket; after which he found out that it was quite time for him to take his departure, and hurried away.

"I can't help taking an interest in the poor little thing," said Mrs. Jared when they were alone; "but it seems a strange story."

"Very," said Jared Pellet.

CHAPTER XIV.—CONCERNING PEW-OPENERS AND POVERTY'S DEALINGS.

NIMROD may have been a mighty hunter in his day; but he was never anything to compare with Jared Pellet, who for twenty long years—at least, years of the ordinary length—had engaged in the chase of one savage, long-fanged, dire, snarling brute of a wolf—a hungry, grinning wretch, grey and grim, and ever licking his thin gums. Old and lank he was, but a very giant in endurance; and it took all Jared's strength and courage to keep him at bay. The wonder was that the battle was kept up so long; and though it was said that Jared engaged in the chase of this wolf, it did not always stand in this light, for more often the wolf chased Jared.

That wolf had lain down his lean, hungry form at Jared's door when he married, and on and off he had been there ever since. What were Nimrod's feats to that of hunting, or keeping at bay, a wolf for twenty long years? Nothing at all. But Jared Pellet had done all this, and was ready to keep up that struggle with the wolf poverty so long as he had breath left in his body.

"It is such a drawback having so many children," Mrs. Jared would say. "What with the doctor, and the nurse, and—dear, dear—the extravagance of the old things, it is really dreadful; and when I'm upstairs, and can't help myself, I do so fidget about the expense. The tea that goes when Patty is not there is really infamous. I'm sure that it is never used; and when you buy black at three shillings, and green at four, it worries you terribly. If ever—you know what I mean—and I wanted one again, poor Mrs. Nimmer had promised to come if I'd set her free on Saturday's for dusting, and, of course, on Sundays; and now she's ill. Oh, dear! If we did not have so many children!"

"What's the use of grumbling?" said Jared.

"When was she taken ill?" said his wife.

"What, Mrs. Nimmer? Last week. Break up, I think. She's past seventy."

Mrs. Jared sighed.

"Children are expensive luxuries," said Jared—"costly, and they will eat so furiously. But there never were such children to eat as ours, bless 'em. Poor folk's children ought to be born without appetites, whereas they seem to come into the world with double share. Some people do reckon the poor to be altogether a different race to their noble selves; and if they are to be so considered, it does seem a

pity that nature does not take the matter up, and provide them with a natural garment of feathers or wool. What a saving it would be in clothes, and boots and shoes!"

"Jared, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!" exclaimed his wife.

"So I am, my dear, quite," said Jared, screwing up his face. "But what is the use of grumbling? 'Like as the arrows in the hands of a giant'—and—'Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them.' But there: they did not pay rent, and rates and taxes, in those days; but had freeholds given them in the land of Israel. Never mind the expense. Look at the kind, my dear; not such children anywhere, I know. Talk about arrows; why, they are as sharp as needles, every one of them; and if you don't make haste I shall settle down to work again, and let you go alone."

"Mr. Ruggles has been here this afternoon," said Mrs. Jared.

"Tim Ruggles? What did he want? I don't owe him a penny."

"Don't talk in that way, dear; just as if everybody who came to the house came for money."

"Well, don't they?" said Jared.

"Of course not—not all," said his wife; "and you should not speak like that."

"Consequences of long habit, my dear," said Jared.

"And, besides, Mr. Ruggles never troubled you for money, though it has been owing him sometimes till I've felt ashamed to see him."

"That beautiful wife of his has, though," said Jared, nursing one leg by the fire, and stirring the glue melting in his little pot for mending purposes.

Mrs. Jared winced a little, and looked hard at her husband.

"Bullied me terribly one day for two and ninepence. Bother the Jezebel, I hate her, if only for the way she treats that child."

"But it was about her he came," said Mrs. Jared.

"What, little Pine?"

"No, about Mrs. Ruggles," said Mrs. Jared, speaking quickly. "He says that there is no doubt about poor Mrs. Nimmer never being able to perform her duties, and he wants you to use any little influence you may have with Mr. Gray and Mr. Timson."

"What for—mending?" said Jared.

"No, no; to back Mrs. Ruggles in trying to get the appointment of pew-opener."

"What! Mrs. Ruggles?"

"Yes, dear."

"I'll see her—"

"And if you will," continued Mrs. Jared, hastily interrupting her husband, "he says that she will not mind the distance."

"Before I'd stir a step to get the nasty old cat the post, I'd—"

"And Mr. Ruggles says if you would speak for her, it would be conferring an obligation upon him that he should never forget, and he hopes you will do your best."

"Bother the man!" exclaimed Jared. "What did he put it in that light for, so as to make one eat one's words? Why, I hate to see the nasty, one-sided looks of the woman, and I know she dislikes me; and now—"

"Why, you'll do your best to do Mr. Ruggles a good turn," said Mrs. Jared, "as I promised him you should."

"Humph!" ejaculated Jared.

"Look here, what a present he has brought for little Jarey."

And she brought forth a magnificent cap of Tim's own make.

"Are we going out to-night?" said Jared.

Mrs. Jared said that they were, and prepared herself for the start, to soon stand, big basket in hand, and ready; for it was marketing night, and preparing for the wants of their large family was a serious matter.

Half an hour after they were in Market-street, now a blaze of light, and forming a bright contrast to the gloom they had left behind; and there are thousands of the daintily nurtured in this our land who might gaze with something akin to wonder upon the busy street of a densely populated neighbourhood on a Saturday night. That is the time when that well-known character, the British working man, has his week's wages in his pocket, and is busily providing for that institution, beside which the Magna Charta itself in the eyes of millions fades into insignificance, for after a week of toil there is something very important in a Sunday dinner.

To go into Market-street on a Saturday night, about eight o'clock, it might be imagined that the whole ten thousand additional lamps of Vauxhall had been lit up. It was so on the night when Jared and his wife steered the big basket through the crowd. Hundreds of voices were bawling; there were barrows full of potatoes, savoy, and parsnips; barrows of Cheap Jack articles, barrows of apples, barrows of oranges, barrows of sticky sweets and nuts, barrows of everything that costermongers could sell; and all so arranged close along the pavement that it seemed a wonder that the shops could do any trade at all. But they could, and plenty of it; for the street was thronged, and buyers came from far and wide.

Here, in the road, stood a very clean-looking woman in widow's dress, with five very clean children, in clean white pinafores, each displaying poverty in its carefully-tutored looks, save and except at such times as something laughter-engendering attracted attention, when laughs followed, till the widow surreptitiously trod upon their toes, when the little faces again grew doleful, and poverty was again held forth for public inspection in company with a box of matches.

A little farther on was the white-smocked, particular-looking countryman, trying to excite commiseration by whistling his doleful, minor-keyed strain, sounding like the chopped-off end of a ploughman's ditty. Here were a man and woman bawling in duet, ballad singer's fashion, the last music-hall gem to an admiring crowd. Here was the quiet corner-shop where Mr. Debris did so large a business—the quiet corner-shop with an entrance in the court, where so many friendly transactions were done in money-lending, entirely with the owner's many relatives—nephews and nieces—for the most part now returning the loans with which he had

favoured them, acting in the meantime as their gentleman of the wardrobe. Here the clothes shop, where so extensive an assortment was always kept, and where a gentleman who studied economy might fit himself out with a superfine "pilot" at fifteen-and-six, a pair of "milled doeskins" at thirteen-and-nine, and a fancy vest at seven-and-three; at the same time placing his head in a "Paris nap" at five-and-eleven, and protecting his feet with a pair of "strong working men's" at eight-and-six—always allowing that he could afford to fit himself out in so elaborate a manner. Farther on, the butcher's, and the greengrocer's, and the grocer's that was not green; but Jared and his wife could not get in there, so went to get a piece of fine old Cheshire at tenpence-halfpenny from the next shop, as well as five eggs for sixpence, butter, and lard. Then back to the grocer's, now fuller than ever, where various items of a domestic nature were purchased. Then there was the butcher's to call at, for a small and economical joint; while, as there was no more room in the big basket, nor yet under Mrs. Jared's shawl, many of the markets had to go in Mr. Jared's pockets.

At length, most heavily laden, Jared and his wife directed their steps homeward, but by a different route to that by which they had come; while, the very model of everything obedient, the husband allowed the wife to lead the way, as he groaned mildly beneath his load, since he was very awkwardly burdened. He felt somewhat like a man carrying a sheet of plate glass down Fleet-street; for he had apples in the same pocket with the eggs, and, that pocket being rather bulgy, people would keep coming in contact; even though he used half a market-bunch of greens as the "Ease her, stop her" boys do the fenders upon the Citizen steamboats to soften collisions. Then, too, there was Mrs. Jared to protect in the crowd; for she was only a little woman, and, though she would not own to it, that big basket bothered her sadly; for it was a regular tyrant, and kept her in a perspiration, cold as was the night.

It really was a brute of a basket—one of those wicker enormities with a cross handle, two flaps, and a large stomach; plenty of room when you could get anything inside; but an abomination of obstinacy which seemed to like to have goods carried half in and half out—top-heavy fashion, with the lids cocked up, and in the way of the handle.

And so it was upon this very night, nothing would pack in as it should—the potatoes certainly did dive in properly; but the beef would not go, spite of all coaxing and contriving. It would not go in, but managed to break the wedge of fine old Cheshire all to crumbs; and there it was, being carried home with the rough bone sticking out, and the wet marrow all over Mrs. Jared's shawl. As for the tea paper, that was burst in the efforts, "and Jenkins' strong old family mixture" was loose amongst the potatoes. But the moist sugar was safe, for it was being carried in a brown paper cone balanced inside Jared's hat.

Any one with sympathetic feelings will easily understand that these sort of things are very trying, and for some little time Mrs. Jared's lips were very

closely nipped together; but this outward and visible sign of annoyance soon passed off, and as they went through a bye-street she suddenly drew up at a liberally-painted shoe-dealer's shop, over which in large letters shone the golden words, "Purkis's Boot and Shoe Emporium," while the gilt flourishes and bands upon the board seemed somehow to remind you strongly of the beadle's cape.

CHAPTER XV.—PURKIS'S EMPORIUM.

"HULLO!" exclaimed Jared, waking up from a dream of Farmer's *Gloria in Excelsis*, "what do you want here?"

"Only to tell Mrs. Purkis to send for Totty's little shoes on Monday," said Mrs. Jared.

Jared was satisfied, and they entered, sending a small bell hung upon the door into a very rage of ringing to summon attendance, although the owner of the establishment was ponderously taking the measure of a customer's foot by means of a long slip of paper and a sliding rule, slowly the while making entries upon the said white strip, and afterwards smearing them out, and re-writing them; but only to directly fall into a state of doubt, and measure again and again, till, in his confusion, he not only made himself very inky, but smeared his customer's white stockings.

But at last Mr. Purkis had finished, sighed relief, dismissed the measured lady with a promise of doubtful fulfilment, taken off his glasses, and then turned to welcome his visitors—Jared, organist of his (Mr. Purkis's) church, being a customer whom he held in some reverence.

A very warm, moist man was Mr. Purkis in all weathers, and during conversation he was always busy dabbing his forehead, or wiping his neck, or hands, even continuing the dessicating process within his shirt collar; but his broad face was wreathed in smiles, and a Chesterfield could not have been more polite to Mrs. Jared.

He would send for the little shoes on Monday; but would not Mr. and Mrs. Pellet step in?

Jared thought not; but Mrs. Jared was of an opposite way of thinking, for she had not come solely about the small shoes, so declaring herself to be tired, she followed Mr. Purkis into the back room, where Mrs. Purkis left off ironing to dust a couple of chairs, and drew a little simmering black saucepan farther from the fire.

"Poor Mrs. Nimmer is dead and gone, sir," said Mr. Purkis to Jared.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Jared and his wife together.

"Yes, sir, went very suddenly at last; only this very afternoon, sir. Forty year had she been pew-opener at St. Runnles—twenty years before I took the beadship."

The conversation had taken the very turn Mrs. Jared desired; in fact she had called on purpose to enlist Mr. Purkis on the Ruggles's side, and though somewhat shocked at the suddenness of the beadle's announcement, yet she felt that for the sake of a family friend so good an opportunity must not be lost.

"And who is to be the new pew-opener, Mrs. Purkis?" she said.

"Who, mum?" replied Purkis, after a good wipe.

"I don't know, mum, I'm sure. I should like the missus to try, but she says she won't."

"Not if I know it, Joseph," exclaimed his lady, thereby implying the possibility of her undertaking the duty in ignorance—"not if I know it, Joseph," she replied, as she polished an iron with a duster. "If a married woman hasn't enough to do to mind her own house and bits of things, it's a pity; and the church has quite enough in you. And besides, how could I attend properly to pew-opening and Mr. Pellet's organ too, I should like to know?"

Jared shuffled in his chair, but Mrs. Purkis's complaint was paid in earnest of her feelings.

"Perhaps Mrs. Purkis will think better of it," said Mrs. Jared.

"Better, ma'am!" said Mrs. Purkis. "No, ma'am, nor worse neither. I shall never do it, as I've told Joseph a half score of times."

"Indeed," said Mrs. Jared; "then, perhaps, you might help a friend of ours a little towards getting the post."

"Friend of yours, mum!" said Mr. Purkis, eagerly. "I'd do all in my way that I could, mum; but that wouldn't be much—only, perhaps, I might keep other people from trying."

"But that would hardly be fair, would it?" said Mrs. Jared.

"Perhaps we had better not go into that part, mum," said Mr. Purkis; "for, of course, we want to serve our own friends first, and I haven't forgot Mr. Pellet's kindness."

"No, nor never shall," chimed in Mrs. Purkis, looking up from her ironing in support of her husband's allusion to Jared's "donus," and also a timely loan when Mr. Purkis had upon one occasion made himself "in a mess," as he termed it, in obliging a friend over a bill transaction.

"Taint every one as will put himself to inconvenience for poor people, and lend money when they're pushed," said Mr. Purkis.

"No, indeed, and well we know that, Joseph," exclaimed Mrs. Purkis, ceasing her ironing, and burning the mark of the flat iron into the garment being smoothed.

"There, I must go if you are going to keep on like this," exclaimed Jared, rising from the chair in which he had been fidgeting about until it scraped upon the floor. "I can't stand this, you know."

And he looked terribly uncomfortable at Mrs. Purkis, who was wiping her eye upon the corner of her apron.

"Don't go, sir, please," said Mr. Purkis, "for I was going to say—to ask, you know—that is, if you wouldn't mind—"

And here he made a telegraphic signal with one arm to his wife, which with one sweep indicated, "Clear away and lay the cloth," and had such an effect upon Mrs. Purkis that she directly dropped her apron and raised the lid of the little black saucepan by the fire.

"We're very homely, Mr. Pellet, sir," said Mrs. Purkis, diffusing a most savoury odour through the little room, "but if you wouldn't mind."

Jared did not wish to stay, but Mrs. Jared did, and over a snug little Saturday night supper the pew-opening matter was thoroughly discussed in all

its bearings; though during the rest of their stay Jared was kept in a state of fidget in consequence of Purkis's allusions to the organist's kindness at different times.

But it was very plain that the beadle and his wife looked up to their visitors as somebodies far above the ordinary run of people with whom they came in contact, while, after their departure, Joseph Purkis dabbed himself for ten minutes as he told his wife that there was not a finer organist in London.

CHAPTER XVI.—MRS. NIMMER'S SUCCESSOR.

THERE was no very great difficulty in the matter: Jared Pellet, under protest, wrote a note to the Reverend John Gray, the vicar, telling him that a friend—he haggled a great deal over that word "friend"—would be glad to undertake the duties of pew-opener in the place of the defunct Mrs. Nimmer, and the vicar mentioned the matter to his friend Mr. Timson, churchwarden and tea-dealer, and both agreed that they would be most happy to oblige Mr. Jared Pellet in the matter.

Then Mr. Timson had an interview with Jared, and told him personally he would be glad to give his weight to the matter if Jared's friend was a worthy, suitable woman.

Now there came a hitch in the smoothness, for Jared went home and told his wife that that red-faced old humbug, Purkis, had played double; and, in fact, he had gone, head-dabbing, into the presence of the vicar and churchwarden, to tell them he should be glad if the post lately occupied by Mrs. Nimmer could be conferred upon a friend of his.

But explanations followed: the two principal candidates were found to be one and the same; and Mrs. Tim Ruggles was duly appointed to a post for whose proper filling she seemed to have been specially manufactured by Dame Nature.

She—that is to say, Mrs. Tim Ruggles—glided as it were into the correct rut upon the very first Sunday; coming to St. Runwald's in a mournful-hued dress—a shot putty and soot; a tightly-fitting cap crowned her head—a cap like a white sarcenet raised pie, all tiny bows and puckers—none of your fly-away-servant-girl style of head-dress, but firmly tied beneath her chin with silken strings. Then, too, a prim white muslin handkerchief encircled her neck, with ends pinned across, and descending to be hidden away and protected by exceedingly stiff, dark-coloured jean stays, whose presence was manifested to the ear of the world at large by divers creaking cracklings, when by rare chance Mrs. Ruggles slightly bent her fierce body—to the eye, by a little peephole afforded where one hook in the back of the dress had an objection to its kindred eye.

She might have been pew-opener for twenty years from the way in which she performed her duties, even trenching upon Mr. Purkis's dominion by frowning at small boys. It was a sight to see the way in which she performed her task, pouncing upon dubious-looking strangers who stood tasting the brims of their hats just inside the doors, and, as she could tell in a moment whether they were disposed or not to be generous, placing them in comfortably cushioned seats, where such miserable sinners could not fail to be somewhat eased in their consciences,

or morally taking the poor things into custody, and then, like some savage warder, shutting them up in cold wooden cells, in corners where it was dark, in black places just below the galleries, in spots beneath the organ, where they sat with a sensation as of liquid thunder being poured upon their heads; or behind pillars, where they could not catch a glimpse of the reading desk, and had to look round the corner at the pulpit. While some she treated worse than all, shutting them up close in the great churchwarden's pew, where they were completely out of sight, Mr. Timson monopolizing all the hassocks so as to peep over the edge.

A very moral hedgehog was Mrs. Ruggles, treating the congregation as if they were so many little Pines entrusted to her charge, and evidently annoyed that she was not allowed, like Mr. Purkis, a cane to use *ad libitum*. Had she been in office at a Ritualistic church, brawlers would have paused ere they had attempted to desecrate the structure. If you went into the church she looked at you sidewise, and calculated your value in an instant, when, if you obeyed the glance of her eye, well; if not, she held up a finger at you, as if to say, "Come here, sir!" and then stay away if you dared.

Why, the pew doors never screamed and scrawled when she opened them. She never shut in your coat tails, or the voluminous folds of a lady's dress; but she punished you severely if ever you attended St. Runwald's without books, for she would glide along the aisle like a religious ghost, and thrust a dreadful, liver-coloured, dog's-eared S.P.C.K. prayer book under your nose, so that you were obliged to take it, and then pay her sixpence as you went out for what you would rather have been without. For if you had been accustomed all your life to a delicately-bound diamond edition, it was not pleasant to stand up in good society holding the sore-edged, workhouse-looking book, while you dared not thrust it out of sight, for she was sure to bring you another, to your everlasting shame and disgrace. It was almost a wonder that people ever again entered the church; and the probabilities are that they never would so have done, had not Jared Pellet drawn them thither with his music.

The best way to meet her was to be prepared with a pocket edition of the Liturgy, when, if it were your custom to stand with hands joined and resting upon the pew edge, under the impression that you were quite at home in the service, down would for a certainty come Mrs. Ruggles, her crackling stays heralding her approach. Then the plan was to be ready for her, and, as she rigidly made a thrust at you with the most disreputable book in her collection, ward off her thrust with one of Jarkins and Potto's little *bijous*.

The assertion cannot be authenticated, but it was said that Mrs. Ruggles, soon after her appointment, used to go round to the bookstalls in Holywell-street, and buy up the old prayer-books out of the tea chests labelled, "All these at twopence;" and these brutal, loose-leaved, mildewed affairs she used to keep in a box in a corner pew, ready to hand, making pounds out of them in the course of a year—a sort of private church rate of her own.

If a *douceur* was given to old Purkis, he bent a

little, or touched his cocked hat, or in some way gave you to understand that he was grateful; but not so Mrs. Ruggles: she seemed to demand the money of you as a right, and you paid it under protest, feeling somehow obliged, although when she took it she seemed to ignore you and your money at one and the same time. Some people said that she must have paid fees to physicians in her day, and so have learned something of their ways; but how she ever contrived to get the sixpences and shillings into her pocket remains one of the great unsolved mysteries, for she never bent in the slightest degree.

Mr. Purkis never took to her, for he declared her to be a woman without a soul for music, since she seemed to make a point of leaving all the dust and cobwebs she could about the organ loft, and neglecting it shamefully, which the beadle said was not the thing, seeing who had been the means of getting her the post.

It was almost startling to hear her when it had grown too late for fresh comers, when the church was completely filled and a portion of the congregation was sitting in aisle and nave upon camp stools and chairs fetched out of the vestry. She would join in then in Litany and Communion, startling the clerk, and getting right before him, so that the congregation would turn and look at her in admiration or otherwise, but without ruffling her in the slightest degree.

CHAPTER XVII.—OFFICIAL.

"A MOST valuable woman, Timson," the vicar would say to the churchwarden—"most suitable person. You never see her flurried when a great many people are waiting for seats."

"Never," said Mr. Timson, gruffly.

The conversation took place in the vicar's snugery, where he and his friend indulged in pipes, gin and water, and cribbage—churchwardenish recreations no doubt, but decidedly not clerical.

"Very stiff and formal she is, certainly," said the vicar; "but, somehow, she never seems to give offence."

"Yes, she does," said Mr. Timson, gruffly; "she offends me. I don't like her. Wish Mother Nimmer was alive again."

"Pooh! nonsense! stuff! prejudice!"

"Shoo, shoo, shoo, shoo!" ejaculated Mr. Timson. "I haven't a bit of prejudice in my whole body."

"I mean," said the vicar, taking not the slightest notice of the interruption, "she never seems to give offence about people's sittings; for hers is a delicate task, and one not easy to manage. I can assure you that I have never had a single complaint as yet, and they used to be constant in Mrs. Nimmer's time."

"'Fraid of her," suggested Mr. Timson.

"I do wish that you would talk rationally, Timson," said the vicar.

"Well, that is rationally," said Mr. Timson.

"The church fills uncommonly well now," observed the vicar, after a pause, so as to start a fresh subject; for Mr. Timson was looking red and choleric, and his short hair was standing up all over his head. "The people seem to like those historical sermons. I think I shall continue them."

"I think I should," said Timson, dryly. "Perhaps it might be as well at the same time to stop some of the music, or give Mr. Pellet a holiday."

"Why?" said the vicar, sharply.

"Make more room in the church," said Timson.

"There, there—I won't quarrel with you, Timson," said the vicar with some asperity; "but I can understand your allusion, though I won't notice it. But to return to the subject, don't you think that Mrs. Ruggles' salary might be a little raised?"

"No," said Mr. Timson, stoutly, "I don't think anything of the kind. Why, what for, pray? when the woman has the same as poor old Mrs. Nimmer, who was worth a dozen of her."

"Well, Timson," said the vicar, quietly, "if you are not disposed to discuss the matter in a liberal sense, why, it had better drop. At least, I think so."

"So do I," said the illiberal Timson.

And consequently the matter did drop, with the an advantage to Mrs. Ruggles of making her appear ill-used woman, much persecuted, in the vicar's eyes.

For the old gentleman most thoroughly believed in her, from her conduct being so exemplary. Always the same quiet, prim woman, ready at proper times to do her duty: to arrange hassocks at a christening, or to point out the positions for the actors at a hymeneal sacrifice. The vicar, in fact, grew to be quite loud in her praises; so loud, indeed, that when with his crony, Timson, Mrs. Ruggles grew to be quite a bone—or rather a bundle of bones—of contention, over which at times they almost quarrelled; for Mr. Timson, either from a spirit of opposition or genuine dislike, invariably took part against the woman. So near were they to quarrelling at times, that, had they been people of a more secular turn, it might have been said that they quite fell out.

The vicar told him so more than once, though Mr. Timson would not believe it; for, in spite of his friendly feeling and genuine respect for his nominator, Mr. Timson could be at times as obstinate as the proverbial pig.

In short there was a division in the church, for and against Mrs. Ruggles, and Purkis told his wife in confidence, that "he couldn't see it at all, and if it hadn't been for Pellets, he knowed." What, he did not say; but he shook and nodded his head a great many times, as he concluded by telling Mrs. Purkis that if she had been ruled by him, Mrs. Ruggles would never have had the post.

"And you'd never have had a decent bit of hot dinner o' Sundays," retorted his lady.

"She's a deceitful one, that's what she is," said Mr. Purkis; "and she aint going to meddle and interfere with my dooties, so come now."

"I shouldn't bemean myself to speak to her if I was you, Joseph," said his wife.

"You might just as well have took the place and gone comfortable to church with me, and come back with me comfortable," said Mr. Purkis, ignoring his wife's last remark.

"And, as I said before, you never knowing what it was to have hot dinners on Sundays," retorted Mrs. Purkis. "No, not if I know it, Joseph. We've been man and wife now turned of thirty year, and never once yet did I give you a cold Sunday dinner.

If I don't know my duty as a wife by this time, it's a pity."

Mrs. Purkis turned very red in the face as she spoke, and, after the fashion of her husband, shook her head, and nodded it till Mr. Purkis—who, if he did not make a god of his gastric region, certainly yielded it the deference due to a monarch—owned that there was something in what she said, when her face assumed its natural hue, which was only a warm pink.

"But it would have been a deal nicer for some things," said Mr. Purkis, who still hung about the subject.

"And a deal nastier in other things, Joseph," retorted his wife; "and that makes six of one and half-a-dozen of the other."

"Just so, my dear," said Mr. Purkis, making his first and last attempt at a joke—"six of one in pounds and half-a-dozen of the other in shillings—six guineas a year, and what you could have made besides; and a very nice thing too."

"And you growling and grumbling because your Sunday dinner was always cold," says Mrs. Purkis, resorting once more to her carnal fortification.

"But I don't know now but what that would have been better," said the beadle, indulging in a habit which he had learned of a stout alderman and magistrate, who believed in its awe-inspiring qualities, since he often tried it upon small pickpockets; while Mr. Purkis was so pleased with it that he always wore it with his beadle's uniform, and practised it frequently upon Ichabod Gunnis, though with so little effect that the said young gentleman only imitated him as soon as his back was turned, frowning, blowing out his cheeks, and then letting them collapse again. "I don't know, my dear," said Mr. Purkis, "but what it would have been better than to have had that woman always pottering about in my church."

"And never even had the decency to call in and thank us for the pains we took," said Mrs. Purkis, "or to drop in occasional for a friendly cup o' tea and a mossle of toast, as anybody else would; or come in now and then and sit down sociably, as poor Mrs. Nimmer would, and ready at any time to take up a bit o' needlework, or a stocking, and have a quiet chat."

"Well," said Mr. Purkis, whose thoughts evidently were running as much upon Sunday dinners as upon pew-openers, "it's of no use to grumble, for what's done can't be undone. But when Christmas comes, and she pushes herself forward so much, I'll let her know, see if I don't. I'm not going to put up with so much of her interference, I can tell her."

"The more you give way, the more give way you may," said Mrs. Purkis, rhythmically.

"Why, she'll want to be beadle next, and clerk too," said Mr. Purkis, indignantly, and growing so warm that he had to wipe inside his shirt collar, as well as dab his head. "Says all the Amens now, she does, louder than the poor old gentleman; reg'lar drowns him in the Litany, and makes herself that conspickyus that it's a wonder Mr. Gray can't see through her, instead of taking her into favour. Not that I mind a bit—not I. Mr. Timson don't like her, though; and you see if he gives her a

Christmas-box, same as he used Mrs. Nimmer—pound o' best black and a quarter o' green he always give her regular."

"Ah, same as he gives us," sighed Mrs. Purkis; "and as good tea as ever stood on a hob to draw."



CHAPTER XVIII.—RICHARD'S SECRET.

TIME passed on, and the brothers Pellet did not meet. There was estrangement, too, between Richard and his stepson, who came up twice during the vacations, but only to leave home again in disgust. He made several calls at Duplex-street, but always in vain; for Jared remained obstinate, and Patty was never once visible.

The effect upon Harry Clayton was to make him stern and morose; he tried billiards, to find them no resource; and he tried rowing, but soon after he gave that up; and at the end of another month, after a business-like letter from his step-father, telling him curtly that he had better give up his college life and take to business, for the little money settled upon him by his late father would not suffice for extravagances, Harry knit his brows, determined upon reading for honours, and staying up till the last moment.

About this time, after an ineffectual visit to Duplex-street, Harry was slowly and thoughtfully sauntering along, wondering whether it was to be always like the present unsatisfactory state of affairs. He was, he told himself, certainly very fond of Patty, but possibly she had never given him a thought since that night. Then his thoughts turned to Richard Pellet, and he wondered how his father's affairs had been at his death; how his mother could have been so weak as to marry again; and then, to his great surprise, he saw a hansom cab stop just in front of him, out of which stepped Richard Pellet, who paid the driver, and, without seeing his step-son, strode off hastily, making his way through the gloomy streets of Pentonville—Harry hesitating the while as to whether he should follow, and then turning in the other direction, while Richard Pellet hurried on

till he arrived at a street rejoicing in the name of Boston, where he stopped at a dingy, forbidding house, and Harry strolled thoughtfully away.

Richard Pellet knocked a slinking sort of double knock, as if afraid of being heard by any one outside the house. It was a double knock, certainly; but it had a mean, degraded sound about it, beside which a poor man's bold single thump would have sounded grand.

He knocked a second time, after waiting a reasonable space, when, after fidgeting about on the doorstep, glancing up and then down the street, and acting the part of a man under the impression that every one is watching him, he was relieved by the door being opened a very little way, and a stern-looking woman confronting him; when, seeing who was her visitor, she admitted him to stand for a moment or two upon the shabby, worn oilcloth of a badly-lighted passage, before ushering him into a damp, earthy-smelling parlour, over whose windows were drawn down Venetian blinds of a sickly green, whose bar-like laths gave a prison aspect to the place.

"Send her down?" said the woman, shortly.

"Yes," replied Richard Pellet, passing a strip of paper from his pocket-book to the woman, who took it, looked at it for a few moments, and then, folding it very small, tied it up in a corner of a dingy, once white pocket-handkerchief, after the fashion of elderly ladies from the country, who ride in omnibuses, and seek in such corners for the sixpence to pay the fare.

Then the woman left the room, and there was the sound of the key being withdrawn from the front door, and steps pattering upon the oilcloth, when the woman reappeared.

"Tain't my fault, you know," she said, in a gruff voice; "it's him. I'd keep her altogether, but he



says he won't have it any more. It's a fool's trick for she never leaves her room. No offence, you know."

"But what is his reason?" said Richard Pellet.

"Oh," said the woman, "he says that it has got about that we keep a mad woman in the house with-

out having a licence, and the neighbours talk, and there will be a summons about it some time or another. He hates to go out, he says—just as if that matters. Don't you think it might be managed after all? I don't want to part with her."

"Yes—no!" said Richard Pellet, correcting himself. "You've thrown up a good thing; and now I've made another arrangement."

"Well," said the woman, surlily, "I was obliged to write. He made me. But you've no call to complain. She's been here now best part of nine years, and always well taken care of at a low rate. No one could have kept her closer."

"What?" said Richard, harshly.

"Well, that was only once; and I took precious good care that she did not play me such a trick a second time. She wasn't away long, though," said the woman, laughing.

"There, send her down," said Richard Pellet, impatiently.

"I don't mind telling you now," said the woman, not heeding the remark, "she's very little trouble: sits and works all day without speaking."

"Humph!" ejaculated Richard Pellet, "now that there's no more money to be made by making contrary statements, you can be honest."

"Well," said the woman, "other people may find out things for themselves; nobody taught me," and then she left the room.

A few minutes elapsed; and then a pale, dark-haired woman, with a pitiful, almost imploring aspect, entered the room, clasped her hands tightly together, and then stood gazing in Richard Pellet's face.

"I'm going to take you away from here, Ellen," he said.

For a few moments the pale face lit up, as, with some show of animation, the woman exclaimed—

"To see my child, Richard?"

"I'm going to take you away from here," he replied, coldly. "You had my letter, of course, so be ready to-morrow."

The light faded from the countenance of the woman in an instant, to leave it dull and inanimate. She pressed her hand for an instant upon her side, and winced as if a pain had shot through her; then, slowly drawing a scrap of needlework from her pocket, she began to sew hastily.

"I have made arrangements for you to stay at an institution where you will be well cared for," he continued; "that is, provided that your behaviour is correct."

The faint shadow of a sad smile crossed the pale face, as the woman glanced at him for a moment, and then sighed, and looked down again.

"Do you hear what I say?" said Richard, roughly.

"Yes, Richard," she said, quietly, and as if resigned to her fate. "I never do anything that you would not wish. I am quite ready, but—"

"Well?" said the great City man.

"You will let me see my little one before I go, Richard? You will not mind that? I will do all that you wish; but why not let us be together? Let me have her, and go away from here, never to trouble you again. Indeed, indeed, never again!"

If he could only have placed faith in those words,

what a burden Richard Pellet would have felt to be off his shoulders! But no, he dared not trust her; and in the few moments while she stood appealingly gazing up in his face, he saw her coming to his office for help, then down to his place at Norwood, and trouble, and exposure, and an angry wife; and Richard Pellet's face grew dark as he turned to leave the room.

"But you will let me see her once, Richard—only once, before I go. Think how obedient I have been—how I have attended to your words, always—always," and she dropped her work upon the floor, and clasped her hands as she stood before him. "Only once, Richard, for ever so little a time."

And the voice grew more and more plaintive and appealing, the tones seeming to ring prophetically in Richard Pellet's ears; so that he found himself thinking, "Suppose those words haunt me on my death bed!" But he started the next moment.

"Be quiet," he exclaimed harshly, as he might have said "down!" to a dog; when, rightly interpreting his words, the woman burst into a low wail, letting herself sink down upon the floor, as she covered her face with her hands and sobbed convulsively. But her hands fell again as she shook her head with the action of one throwing back thick masses of curling hair, and looking sharply up, she listened, for the sound of a bell fell upon her ear. The cause was plain enough, for Richard Pellet stood before her with the rope in his hand.

Then she slowly rose, sighing as she closed her eyes, and stood motionless, until the woman of the house came into the room and laid a talon-like hand upon her shoulder. But though the prisoner shivered, she did not move from her place, only opened her eyes and gazed once more imploringly at Richard Pellet, who, however, avoided her gaze, and, walking to the window, peered through the blinds.

"Ellen!" said the woman, in a harsh voice; when slowly and unresistingly, a prisoner for the sake of Richard Pellet's prosperity, Ellen Herrysey slowly followed her gaoler from the room; while, with knitted brows, the visitor stood listening till the woman came back.

A long conversation ensued, during which Richard Pellet was trying very hard to make out whether the woman he had employed for so many years as gaoler was in earnest respecting her wish to give up the duty, or whether it was a mere piece of business fencing to obtain more money; and he left at last, after talking loudly about the ease with which he could make arrangements for Ellen's reception, the woman looking at him the while with a strange, light smile.

"Another twenty pound a year will do it," said Richard to himself, as he walked away. "She won't give up the money."

"Fifty pounds a year more, or I'll know the reason why," said the woman, as she closed the door.

And then both parties communed largely with their own thoughts respecting the future.

CHAPTER XIX.—UNDER A CLOUD.

MR. RICHARD PELLET was back at Norwood about the same time as his step-son reached Shoreditch Station, bound for Cambridge.

The former had all the cares upon him of a dinner party to be given that evening, for Mrs. Richard had issued her cards to a select circle of City magnates, with their wives and daughters—men who matched well with Richard Pellet, and ladies with whom his wife could converse and compare notes concerning their children. People, for the most part, who had little places of their own in the neighbourhood, and went up daily to the City. People who kept carriages, or hired flies—all were there. The stout butler and men in carriage lace were hardly worked that evening; for the best dinner service was in use, and the best plate had been taken out of green baize bags, from baize-lined boxes; the three extra black-looking leaves had been fitted into the dining table; the large epergne was filled with flowers; Bokes, the butler, had turned eighteen damask dinner napkins into as many cocked hats, all crimps and puckers; prepared his salad—a point which he never yielded—and decanted his wines. Two men in white were down from Gunter's, the confectioner's, and had been busy all day, driving cook and kitchenmaid out of their senses, as they declared again and again that there was nothing in the kitchen fit to use.

They vowed that the great prize kitchener was a sham; the patent hot-plate good for nothing; the charcoal stove and warm cupboard abominations both; stewpans, saucepans, kitchen fittings generally, a set of rubbish; and asked again and again generally how they were to work without stock. And there would hardly have been any dinner if Mrs. Richard Pellet, at the hearing of about the twentieth complaint, had not taken Mr. Bokes, the butler, into her counsel, when that gentleman went quietly back to his pantry, and thence into the kitchen—which was hotter, morally, than ever—when he mysteriously signalled the two gentlemen in white with his thumb, and shortly after installed them in two chairs in his pantry.

Then, as if performing some mysterious ceremony, Mr. Bokes made the cork of a port wine bottle "skreel," as he tortured it by forcing through it a screw, and then brought it forth with a loud "fop," holding it out wet and bloodstained—grape—for the senior Gunterian to sniff at, afterwards to his lieutenant; when the following solemn dialogue took place—

"Twenty," said Mr. Bokes, in deep tones.

"Twenty?" repeated the Gunterians, in duet.

"Twenty," said Mr. Bokes, more solemnly; and then he added, "Five bin."

There was silence then for a time, while, arming his guests with two large claret glasses, Mr. Bokes tenderly poured forth the deep-hued generous liquor, when, confidentially—

"Seeing as you're both gentlemen as goes a deal into the best of society, I should like to hear your opinion."

"But you'll join us?" said Gunter I., to Mr. Bokes.

"Well, reayly, gentlemen," said Mr. Bokes, hesitating.

Gunter I. set down his glass, pursed up his mouth, and looked at Gunter II., who also set down his untasted glass, folded his arms, and looked fiercely at Mr. Bokes.

"Well, raylly, gentlemen," said the butler, "if that's it, I suppose I must."

And helping himself to a glass, the three took wine together, after the fashion of those for whom they catered, but with infinitely more dignity; when Gunter I. thought it a tolerably fruity wine.

"Wants more age, though," said Gunter II.

"Well, I don't know," said Gunter I.; "for a tawny wine of a light body it's fairish."

"I think I'll take another glass, Mr. Bokes," said Gunter II.—Gunter I. following his example, when the butler filled their glasses, not forgetting his own.

After this there was a discussion upon crust, and beeswing, and vine disease, when Mr. Bokes dropped a hint about the finest glass of Madeira to be had in or out of London being on the way when the dinner was over; when a sudden stop was put to the conversation by the ringing of a bell, and as James, footman, and Thomas, under-butler, were busy over other matters, Mr. Bokes went to answer the summons.

Five minutes elapsed before the butler returned, in time to find the bottle perfectly empty, and the Gunters smacking their lips over the last drops in their glasses, when, no more being then forthcoming, the gentlemen in white returned to the kitchen sufficiently good-humoured for No. I. to smile affably upon the cook, and No. II. to address the kitchen-maid as "My dear," in asking for a wooden spoon.

The full resources of the Norwood establishment were brought out that night, and Jared Pellet, of Duplex-street, would have looked less dreamy could he have seen the dinner served in a dining-room that was one blaze of candles, plate, and glass. Even the most ill-disposed of the guests acknowledged the repast to be a success—that is, as far as appearances went. There was only one failure, and that was the smash made by one of the men of a dish of *meringues*, leaving a blank in one place upon the table. Wine, ices, attendance—all were good: and there could not be a doubt of the high position Mr. Richard Pellet occupied, not only in the City, but in the pleasant, suburban district of Norwood.

The ladies had risen, and, amidst a pleasant rustling of silk, swept upstairs. The gentlemen had drawn their chairs nearer together, for the convenient passage from hand to hand of port decanter or claret jug, when Mr. Bokes, the Norwood Pharaoh's chief butler, whispered to his master that he was wanted.

"Indeed," said Mr. Richard Pellet, loudly; for he was dealing out his opinion upon City matters, "unless a similar crisis should arise, I give you my word of honour, gentlemen, that it must be. Now, Bokes,"—in an undertone—"who the deuce wants me?"

"Tall, stout woman, sir."

"Lady?"

"No, not lady, sir—woman, sir. Says must see you, sir."

"Tell her to call to-morrow," said Richard, impatiently. "I'm engaged."

Mr. Bokes left the room, and his master continued—

"Limited liability, and companies generally, gen-

tle men, are becoming the ruin of our land. I don't believe in them. You never see my name down as director anywhere. Why, I have had no less than four applications, gentlemen—no less than four—to sell my little bit of business, to be formed into a company, with your humble servant to act as manager, with a noble price, a handsome salary, and no end of shares into the bargain. But no, gentlemen, I am determined— Now, Bokes," impatiently, "what is it?"

"Woman—sir, will see you," whispered the butler. "Says I was to say 'Boston-street' to you, and 'gone!'"

There was such a strange pallor came over Richard Pellet's face that it was noticed by several of his friends, as rising, with a forced attempt at a smile, he asked them to excuse him for five minutes.

"Only fancy," thought Richard Pellet to himself, "if she should have made her way here to-night."

The perspiration stood upon his forehead at the very idea of the exposure and scandal such a visit would have caused.

"What's wrong?" said Alderman Espicier to his neighbour—"Pellet's bank broke?"

"Writ more likely," said the other, charitably.

And then they made a few pleasant comments upon the wine they were drinking, calculated its cost per dozen; wondered whether the epergne and ice-pails were silver or electro, but hardly liked to seek for the hall-marks, in case the host should return and find them so engaged; in short, during the absence of their host, they looked upon everything in a truly commercial spirit, that might not have been quite agreeable, had he seen it, to their entertainer.

Meanwhile, taking up a chamber candlestick, Richard Pellet had hurried into the library, where he found the woman from the house in Boston-street—the gaoler of Ellen Herrysey.

"Now," he exclaimed, harshly, "what is it?"

"Gone!" said the woman, abruptly.

"Who? What? Ellen?" exclaimed Richard. "How? When?"

"Do you want all that answered at once?" said the woman, coolly, and in an insolent tone—the voice of one who had taken her last cheque from her employer.

"There, speak out, I'm busy—company!" exclaimed Richard, impatiently.

"Well," said the woman, "I've nothing more to say, only that she is gone; and I can't tell you how she managed it. Of course my responsibility was at an end when you paid me, and I considered that she was only staying to oblige you. But I never thought that she would attempt to get away, or I would have watched her. Perhaps she's off to see the little one again."

"And you never watched her!" hissed Richard, standing with clenched fists before the woman.

"No," she replied, coolly, "you took care only to pay me up to this morning, so it's your affair now. If you choose to be mean, you must put up with the consequences. And, what's more, you ought to thank and pay me for coming to put you on your guard."

Richard Pellet's visitors heard no more that night respecting the limited liability companies, when,

after giving the strictest orders that if any one else came to the house she was to be shown directly into the library, he returned to his guests, and took coffee, unaware that the two gentlemen in carriage-lace thrust their tongues into their cheeks at one another, after a fashion meant to be derisive, and, as soon as they were at liberty, went and related the news in the servants' hall.

"If she had chosen any other day it would not so much have mattered," said Richard Pellet to himself; "but to have picked out such a time as the present!"

With such thoughts in his mind, it is no wonder that, until the last guest had departed, Richard Pellet's eyes were turned anxiously towards the door every time it opened, when, Nemesis-like, he expected to behold the tall, pale figure he had looked upon that day in Boston-street, clasping her hands, and asking to be with her child.

CHAPTER XX.—TRIMMING THE LAMP.

"THERE you are," said Tim Ruggles, shaking up a bottle, and carefully pouring out a dessert spoonful of cod-liver oil into a wine-glass, previously well wetted round with the thin bluey fluid which the Carnaby-street people bought under the impression that it was milk. "There you are," said Tim, as he sat cross-legged upon his board, "and now look sharp and get a lump of sugar out of the basin, and take your oil before she comes back."

"Bray-vo!—capital! And never made one ugly face!" exclaimed Tim, as little Pine drank the contents of the glass, but not without a slight shudder. "That's the thing to bring you round, little one—bring you round, and turn you round, and make you round as a little tub. Oil turns into fat, you know; and fat keeps you warm in winter. Fat's nature's great coat, you know, for quilting and padding people's ribs, and wants no stitching on nor pressing down. That's the way to—scissors—thanky'e, my pet—the way to trim the—trim the—now my twist and the short needle—that's him—to trim the lamp of life, that is; and you only want to swallow a long skein of cotton, and light one end, and then you'd burn. My eye, what a go it would be for her to come home and find you burning. But come, I say, put that bottle away before she comes back."

Tim was very particular that the cod-liver oil bottle should be put away before Mrs. Ruggles returned from marketing; for though the dispensary doctor had ordered that medicine twice a day for the child's cough, and a reasonable quantity was supplied, Tim had an idea of his own that if it were taken twice as often it would act with double rapidity. So he used to invest all his very spare cash in the purchase of more of the nauseous medicine, and kept a private stock, out of which he replenished the bottle in the cupboard, so that it should not appear in Mrs. Ruggles' eyes to disappear too quickly.

"Does seem such a thing," said Tim to himself, "to see any one suffering when you can't do anything to help them. There's her poor little cough getting worse and worse, and them fits keep coming on, and I can't help her a bit. It's dreadful, that it

is. If one has to rub, or hold, or lift, or do something, it don't seem half so bad; but to stand doing nothing but looking on is the worst itself. Never saw such a child as she is, though; and it makes me shiver when she gets looking in that far-off way of hers, as if she could see more than any one else. Takes her stuff without a word; but I'd sooner see her kick and cry out, and then have a good laugh after, when I talk rubbish about trimming the lamp. I don't know what it's a coming to, for she aint like no other child—aint like a child at all—that she aint."

It was not once that Tim would mutter in that fashion over his work, but often and often; and in spite of his words, he did know in his heart what was coming, though stitching away there upon his board, early and late, he tried to shut his eyes to the ray of light that fell upon them—a ray of pale, wondrous light, as from another world—a light which shone with a cold lustre in upon his heart, to tell him that something must soon come to pass.

For little Pine had of late grown quieter day by day; dull and heavy too at times, falling asleep in her chair, and more than once upon the bare floor, where Tim had found her, and gently raised her head, to place beneath it the list-tied roll of newly-cut cloth for a pair of trousers, and then to cover her with his coat.

As the days had shortened, a hectic look settled in her little cheeks, and a cough came on to rack her chest; when night after night would Tim creep out of bed to give her lozenges and various infallible sweets which he had purchased to allay the irritating tickle that kept her awake hour after hour.

"Pon my word," Tim would say, "I don't think I should take more notice of that child if she was my very own; but somehow I can't help this here."

And it was plain enough that Tim could not help "this here;" and intent as he seemed upon his work by day, his thoughts were fixed upon the poor child, whom he watched hour after hour unnoticed by his domestic tyrant.

"I don't like it," muttered Tim, "it's all rules of contrary; that there cough ought to make her pale and poorly, and it don't, for it makes her little cheeks red, and her eyes bright, and it aint nat'ral for her to not eat nothing one time, and to eat savage another; and I'm 'most afraid to say anything to her because she's so old and deep."

"Am I going to die?" said the child one day, suddenly, as she left off work to gaze up earnestly in Tim's face.

"Eh? What? Going to which?" exclaimed Tim, startled.

"Am I going to die, and go away?" said the child again.

"I'm blessed," muttered Tim, "who's agoing to answer questions like that? Why we're all of us going to die some day, my pretty," said Tim aloud, and in quite a cheery voice, whose fire he directly after damped by singing in a peculiar, reedy, cracked voice—

"Oh that 'll be joyful,
Joyful, joy-yoy-ful, joy-hoy-ful,"

but in so melancholy a fashion that it was evident

that Tim Ruggles did not look forward to the joyful event with much pleasure.

"Yes, I know that," said little Pine, dreamily; "but am I going to die soon, and go to my mother? Mrs. Johnson, who lived upstairs, used to take cod-liver oil, and she soon died."

"Bother Mrs. Johnson!" exclaimed Tim, fiercely. "I say, you know, you mustn't talk like that, my pet; it makes one feel as if cold water's running down one's back. You aint Mrs. Johnson, and you're taking that there stuff to make you strong and well. Now, come on, and let's say catechism."

"No, please, not this morning," little Pine would say, "my head does ache so—so much, and catechism makes me cough."

And then the sharp little elbow would rest upon the thin knee, and little Pine would rest her head upon her hand, and listen to the tailor as he tried to tell her stories raked up piecemeal out of his memory, where they had lain for so many years that they had grown rusty, and hardly recognizable. When Puss would somehow manage to get into the wrong boots, and perform wonders in the famed seven-league pair; a sensational story would be contrived out of the exploits of Jack the Giant Killer, Jack Sprat, and the hero of the beanstalk; while, where Robinson Crusoe's adventures began, and Sinbad the Sailor's ended would have puzzled the most learned.

For, after the fashion of his craft, Tim would baste one piece on to another, and fit in here, and fit in there, according to the circumstances of the case, when the invariable result was that little Pine would begin to nod, and Tim to steal softly off his board, and closer and closer, till he could let the weary little head rest against his breast; when he would kneel there in some horribly uncomfortable position until the short doze was over, and the child would once more start into wakefulness, to gaze up in a frightened way in his face. Then, seeing who held her, she would smile and close her heavy eyelids, nestling down closer and closer within the open waistcoat, the little thin arms trying to clasp him tightly, Tim anxiously watching the while, with contracted brows, the painful catching of the child's breath, and the spasms of pain that drew her little features.

The church duties took Mrs. Ruggles away often now, to the softening of these latter days of the poor child's life; and many and many an hour would Tim spend in the way described—hours which he would have to work far into the night to redeem, when others were sleeping, so that the item of paraffin became so heavy an expense in the domestic economy that Tim had to replenish the can on the sly, after the manner of the cod-liver oil bottle.

The consequence was that Tim's beer money seldom made its way to the publican.

How swiftly sped those minutes spent with poor little Pine, and how slowly would the hours crawl on, when, with his shaded lamp throwing its glow upon his work, Tim would sit stitching patiently away like what he was—a little, shrunken, shrivelled tailor!

CHAPTER XXI.—TIM SEEKS SYMPATHY.

"I DON'T know what to make of that child, ma'am," said Tim, in Duplex-street. "I'm afraid that she's in a bad way, and that we ought to see another doctor."

"Then why not take her to one, Mr. Ruggles?" said Mrs. Jared, rather tartly; for she did not quite approve of Tim's obedience to his better half.

"Expense—expense—expense, ma'am," said Tim. "You see, Mrs. Ruggles keeps the purse, and has her own ideas about money. Wonderfully clever woman; but I don't quite think she sees how bad poor little Pine is."

"Mr. Ruggles, I don't like your wonderfully clever women," said Mrs. Jared. "They are not worth much generally. I like to see a woman clever enough to do her duty to her husband and family; and if she knows that, and does it well, she is quite clever enough, to my way of thinking."

"Gently, my dear, gently," said Jared.

For Mrs. Jared Pellet was growing rather warm, and—as is peculiar to the female sex—loud; but Jared's words acted like oil, and his wife's feathers grew smooth directly.

Some time had elapsed since Tim Ruggles had made his appearance in Duplex-street, for the trousers trade had been brisk, and he had been busy enough at home, while messages from the foreman of the shop for which he worked were constantly being borne to Carnaby-street, to know whether Mr. Ruggles meant to wear out that last pair of trousers as well as make them; or if he did not mean to make those last two pair to send them back, and to let somebody else; "when, you know," said Tim, "at my lodgings it was all board. I had my breakfast on the board, my dinner on the board, my tea on the board, my supper on the board; and for nights the only sleep I had was an hour or two when I lay down on the board, and dreamed I was a sewing machine, and that Mrs. Ruggles was turning my handle—when she was only shaking my arm because it was morning, and time for me to be up and at work once more."

There was peace now in the domestic grove at Duplex-street: the children were all in bed; Patty was thinking of Harry Clayton, as she sewed on buttons and strings where small garments needed them; and Mrs. Jared was industriously embroidering a workhouse window pattern upon one of a basket-full of stockings, some of which strongly resembled the Irishman's knife, for it was a difficult matter to make out any portion of the original hose, so covered were they with Mrs. Jared's darnings.

Jared was busy with his glue-pot. That glue-pot was generally the companion of Jared Pellet's leisure evenings. It was to Jared Pellet what a pocket-knife is to some people, string to others—it was a perfect treasure, and with it he performed feats strongly allied to Robin, Houdin, or Wiljalba Frikell, without taking into consideration the money it earned him. Boots and shoes were mended to a wonderful extent; wall paper torn down by tiny mischievous fingers was replaced; broken chairs had their limbs set; in fact, Jared looked upon glue as a panacea, even going so far as to pop scraps in

his mouth, though it cannot be avowed that he swallowed them, and it may only have been for the purpose of cleansing his fingers.

And yet it was a nasty little pot, being of a vicious character, and given to boiling over, and covering Mrs. Jared's hobs and polished black bars with a nasty, sticky slime that would not come off; while, when she remonstrated with Jared, being naturally proud of her black-leading, he quietly told her that it was of the nature of glue to stick, and that the little pot ought to have been watched. Just as if it was of any use to watch the treacherous little object; for one moment it would be calm, and the next in a state of violent eruption—hissing, bubbling, and sending forth noxious jets of steam to an extent which made it unapproachable.

Tim Ruggles sat very silent after Mrs. Jared had spoken, for he entertained a very profound respect for her expressions of opinion; but the upshot of that conversation was that, in spite of his wife's opposition, he took little Pine to a doctor, though a hint from Tim respecting the possibility of a cessation of certain payments, in the event of what he called "anything happening," somewhat softened Mrs. Ruggles' opposition. The next time, too, after that conversation that Tim went to Bedford-row to draw the payment as usual, he ventured to suggest that a little medical advice was necessary for the child, when the gentleman who took his receipt said, "Oh!" in a quiet manner, as much as to say, "I quite agree with you; and you think so, do you?"

"Her cough tears her poor little chest awful, sir," said Tim, respectfully,

"Indeed!" said the legal gentleman, who was very pale, smooth, and cool.

"Her sleep's broken a deal too, sir," said Tim, warming to his task.

"Ah!" said the legal gentlemen, with a quiet, well-bred smile, which no amount of torturing would have turned into a laugh.

"It wherrits me to hear her, sir, awful," said Tim; "and I think if them as belonged to her knowed, they'd—"

"Give instructions, eh?" said the legal gentleman. "There, there, she's in capital hands—couldn't be in better. Try a little magnesia, or dill water, or squills, or what you like. Good morning, Mr. Ruggles. You have the note, I think. This day two months, mind."

"But, sir," exclaimed Tim, eagerly. "If you was to put it to them."

"Exactly," said the legal gentleman. "Parker and Tomlins abstract on office table. Coming!" he exclaimed, replying to some imaginary call. "Good morning, Mr. Ruggles—this day two months."

Tim Ruggles found himself the next minute in the entry, holding the money he had received very far down in his pocket with one hand, as if every one in Bedford-row and its vicinity was intent upon garotting him, and bearing off his cash.

"Squills, indeed!—magneshy!" exclaimed Tim, indignantly; "I'd like to give him magneshy—a brute! It's my opinion as they wouldn't much mind if something was to happen, and this sorter thing could be dropped."

And he left go of his money, drew forth that hand, and slapped his pocket; but only to thrust his hand

back the next moment, and hold tightly to his treasure; for Tim told himself that some of it should go in comforts for the child, or he'd know the reason why.

Tim crossed Holborn, and made his way into a retired street, when he gave vent to a deep sigh, and, as if continuing his interrupted train of thought, he muttered—

"I can't say as I shall only come here once, or twice, or a hundred times to fetch this; but it's my opinion something will happen."

The thought of "something" happening seemed to cut Tim to the quick, for, as if to force down the rising grief, he crushed his hat down over his eyes, and hurried through the streets to his abode, where he found Mrs. Ruggles waiting to take charge of the money.

"Of course not," exclaimed that lady, as soon as Tim had related his conversation with the lawyer. "What would they care? Glad of it, as hundreds more would be; but we'll disappoint them—they're not going to get off as easy as they expect."

Tim hugged himself in secret as he saw the effect of his words; for after that, for a season, Mrs. Ruggles was very particular in seeing that the child took her medicine, and was at the dispensary at proper hours for receiving advice.

But this did not last long, Mrs. Ruggles declaring that there was not much the matter, and returning to her old ways; though, certainly the blows fell less often than formerly.

CHAPTER XXII.—THE ALARM QUELLED.

BY nine o'clock in the morning of the day succeeding that of his dinner party at Norwood, Mr. Richard Pellet, eager and anxious, was in Boston-street. He would have been there hours before, but Mrs. Richard Pellet had been suffering from over excitement, which was her way of describing a sharp fit of indigestion, brought on by over-indulgence in the good things of the table. So Mrs. Richard Pellet had been faint and hysterical, and violently sick, and prostrated. She had consumed nearly half a bottle of the best Cognac; the servants had been, like their master, up nearly all night; and the consequence was that about five o'clock Mr. Richard Pellet had lain down for an hour, which had, in spite of anxiety, extended itself to three. He awoke under the impression that he had been asleep five minutes, when he smoothed himself, hurried to the train, took a cab, and arrived at Boston-street two hours later than he had intended.

If he could have made sure that, now she was gone, he would see no more of Ellen Herrisey, he would have ceased from troubling himself in the matter; but, as he expressed himself, in his position the dread of any exposure was not to be borne.

It would never have done for his name—the name of Mr. Richard Pellet—known everywhere in the City; down, too, in so many lists amongst the great philanthropists of the day—to be brought forward in such a connection, and then to be dragged through the mud and laughed at by those who had grudged his rise. Why, his name was held in honour by all the great religious societies, whose

secretaries invariably sent him reports of their proceedings, and they did no more for what Richard called the "Nobs." So by nine the next morning he was at Boston-street, hot, angry, undecided, and uncomfortable.

No doubt, he told himself, by putting the police upon her track he would be able to find her; but such a proceeding would involve confidences, and partake to some extent of the nature of an exposure, which he could not afford. No, it must be done without that; so, with the intention of managing it quietly, he gave a sneaky, diffident, hang-dog rap at the door, as he glanced up and down the street to see if he was observed—such a knock as might be given by a gipsy-looking woman, with her wean slung at her back, and a bundle of clothes' pegs for sale in her hand.

But Richard's Pellet's humble, no-notice-attracting knock had as little effect inside the house as in the street at large; and, in spite of the giver's impetuous manner and fidgeting glances up and down, no one came.

There was no help for it, so the early caller gave another rap at the door—a single rap; for from the effects of an ordinary double knock he saw in imagination a score of heads at the open doors and windows of the densely populated street, gazing at, and looking down upon him, as the doctor and ordainer of strait waistcoats for the woman said to be insane, and kept so closely for years past in a room at No. 804.

Quite five minutes now elapsed without his venturing to knock again, while he pretended to be absorbed in the contents of the newspaper he held in his hand. But at last his position grew painful, for a small boy, bearing a big child, came and sat himself upon the step, and looked at him; then two more children came, and cricked their necks as they gazed up in his face, and a woman across the way also lent her attention.

Richard Pellet was turning all over in a state of profuse perspiration, and had his hand once more raised to the knocker, when he heard a door open apparently beneath his feet, and he started as a voice from the area shouted—

"What is it?"

The important City man's perspiration, from being cold, now grew to be hot; but he felt that it was no time for being indignant, so he looked down from his height, moral and literal, upon a little, old-faced, wrinkled-browed girl-of-all-work, almost a child, who was rubbing her cheek with a match-box.

"Missus aint down yet," she replied, in answer to interrogations.

"I'll come in, then, and wait," said Richard Pellet, peering down through the railings; but the girl shook her head.

"She said I wasn't to let no one in," said the girl. "There's so many tramps and beggars about."

"There!" exclaimed Richard, impatiently, as he threw down a card. "Take that up to her, and I'll wait here; or, no, give me that card back," he said, for he told himself that it was impossible to say where that card might go.

The girl tried to throw the card back, and succeeded in projecting it twice over a couple of feet,

to come fluttering down again, when she caught it, and stood shaving and scraping the dirt off her cheek with its edge, evidently finding it more grateful than the sand-paper of the match-box.

"There, never mind," said Richard—"go and tell her Mr. Norwood is here."

"Mr. Norwood?" said the girl.

"Yes, Mr. Norwood," exclaimed Richard, angrily.

And the girl disappeared, Richard employing himself the while in peering furtively about for observers.

He had turned his back to the area, and was wondering whether the potman, coming down the street with what appeared to be a gigantic bunch of pewter grapes upon his back, was intent upon his own affairs or watching him, when he started, for a shrill "I say!" ascended from the area, and, looking round, he found the diminutive maid presenting him with his card, which was stuck amongst the hairs of a long broom, whose handle enabled the child to elevate the piece of pasteboard to within its owner's reach.

"I thought I could do it," said the girl, laughing.

"Go—and—tell—your—mistress—mis—ter—Norwood—wants—her!" hissed Richard Pellet, savagely, as with one action he seized the card and shook his fist at the girl.

"Haden't you better call again," said the imp, "and leave the paper; she never pays fust time, and you aint been before."

"Go—and—"

Richard Pellet got no farther; for, alarmed at his fierce tones, there was a scuffle and a banging door, and the shrill-voiced child had disappeared.

Another five minutes elapsed, when the door chain was taken down, the key laboriously turned, and Richard Pellet was admitted by the dirty-faced girl, and shown into the parlour, where, staring the whole time, the child polished a chair for him with her apron, her nose upon her arm, and then wondering why the black-coated, important visitor had no rate-books sticking out of his pocket, she announced that missus would be down directly.

Fuming and frowning, Richard Pellet seated himself upon a rubbed chair, but only to bound from it at the end of a minute in a state of nervous perturbation, caused by some urchin suddenly and furiously rattling his hoopstick along the area railings. But Richard Pellet was somewhat unstrung, and had been drinking during the night of wakefulness more than was good for him, to allay the annoyance and harass to which he had been subjected; and now the potent spirit was reminding him of the infringement.

But as he once more seated himself, Richard Pellet determined upon one thing, and that was, should he obtain a clue by whose means he could trace and overtake Ellen, he would not leave her again until he had seen her safely within St. Ascetica's Home.

"Where I shall know that she is safely disposed of for at least two years. For once there, I know she will be tame and quiet as ——— Curse her, though! why did she play me such a trick as this? Where can she be? She must be after the child. I wish it was——"

Richard Pellet did not finish his sentence, but

started up, and stood staring at the figure which now entered the room.

"Why—why," he stammered, "I thought you had gone off."

"Gone?" said Ellen, with a weary smile—"gone? No, no. I only went to see her little face once more, and she was not there. You had taken her away. And I came back, Richard, for I knew you would be angry, and I said that perhaps you would forgive me, and let me see her again, and tell me where she is. Only once, Richard—only once—just for a minute."

And the clasped hands went up towards him once more in supplication.

But a worldly spirit was strong upon Richard Pellet. In that hour his spirits rose, and he felt elate, for the danger was past; and knowing full well this woman's truthful, candid nature, he felt that it was as she said. She had been to the house, and then returned, and there was no exposure now, nothing to fear; and his heart grew hard as flint, as he sneeringly said—

"You're confoundedly obedient all at once." And then, with a half laugh, "Why didn't you stay away altogether?"

"Obedient, Richard?" she sobbed. "Was I not always your slave? Did I not always do as you wished? And now but this one little request—this one prayer—"

She paused, for her gaoler entered the room.

"Ho!" said the woman, "you know all about it by this time, I suppose. Found her back again when I got home. Perhaps you'd better pay me my cab fare to Norwood and back."

Richard Pellet's hand went reluctantly into his pocket; for though he was generosity's self with his money when he could see return or interest, or at least show, in other matters he grudged every shilling he spent. But the woman's demand was satisfied, and she left the room, taking with her Ellen; while upon her return fresh arrangements were made, and the bars of Ellen Herrysey's prison grew closer.

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CHAPTER XXIII.—NURSE OR DOCTOR?



H, Mr. Ruggles, you ought to have been a woman," said Mrs. Jared, one Sunday, when Tim came to see them after church, and brought with him little Pine.

He had taken her for a treat, he said, to hear Mr. Pellet play the organ; and now, having accepted Mrs. Jared's pressing invitation to dinner, he had been explaining to that lady the various plans he had adopted for keeping the child warm; for Mrs. Jared had been taking quite a motherly interest in the gentle little thing, and recommending flannels and wrapping.

But Tim had forestalled her, as he triumphantly showed, for there was flannel in divers forms neatly stitched and adapted. The little jacket the child wore was built by Tim; and in various ways he displayed how thoroughly he loved his little charge.

Sundays were glorious days for Tim and little Pine, since Mrs. Ruggles now spent so much of her time at St. Runwald's. Sometimes Tim would take the child to church, and sit as close to the organ as possible, that Pine might catch a glimpse of Jared through the curtains, and listen to the strains he made the grand old instrument pour forth; for Jared kept to the old fashion of playing a symphony between each verse of psalm or hymn, at times, too, forgetting himself, and lengthening out his little extempore scraps to a strange extent. But vicar and congregation murmured not; Mr. Timson was the only objector, and when he found fault Jared always apologized so pleasantly, that the most rigid of churchwardens ought to have been satisfied; though Mr. Timson was not, for he would say to the vicar, "Why, he'll forget all about it by next Sunday." And Mr. Timson was quite right.

But little Pine used to say it made her think, and would lay her head against the boards, close her eyes, and seem rapt.

"It makes me think about her," she would whisper to Tim, if he rose to go before Jared had finished; and then Tim would look mournful, as he reseated himself, and took hold of the little wasted hand, raised to make him stay.

And then what walks they would have—those two—now to Regent's, now to St. James's Park—walks of toil for Tim, whose heart would sink as he found the child less and less able to bear the toil; stopping occasionally to rest, or looking pitifully up in his face to say, "Don't walk so fast, please." I wonder how many miles Tim would carry that child upon a fine Sunday! Day of rest! it was a day of hard labour for Tim; but it was a labour of

love. If the day was cold, he would trudge along merrily; while if it were warm, on still he would go, his face shining with pleasure, and the perspiration standing in beads amongst the wrinkles.

"If we could only manage a p'ramb'lator," said Tim.

But little Pine flinched from the idea when it was broached.

"It would look so childish for me to ride in one," she said, wearily.

And Tim gazed wonderingly at the strange, old look upon the girl's face, as she passed a finger across her forehead and temples to smooth back the stray hairs, now on this side, now on the other, where they lay lightly on the broad, blue, veined expanse.

One of Tim's favourite spots was at the lodge in Hyde Park, where curds and whey were sold; but the child did not seem to care much for the treat, as Tim called it, but she used to sit spoon in hand, and sip and sip, looking longingly the while at the flowers.

And it must have been on account of little Pine's love for flowers that Tim would brave Mrs. Ruggles' displeasure by becoming terribly enamoured of them himself, buying pots of musk, and geraniums, and little rose trees, which all brought a light into the child's eye, though in that close room in Carnaby-street the plants soon lost their bloom, fading day by day—now dropping a blossom, now a leaf, in spite of such fresh air as could be obtained, watering, and placing in the sun, for so long as it shone on the back windows.

"They wants more fresher air," Tim would say.

And then as he threaded his needle he would look across the room at little Pine, and sigh softly to himself as he thought of how she too seemed to want fresher air, such as he could only give her once a week; while if it proved to be a wet Sunday, though he would willingly have staggered along carrying the child, with an umbrella held over her, yet he dare not take her into the damp air, but sat at home to tell her wondrous stories of the good old times, or read her what he considered to be entertaining and instructive scraps from *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*. Some people might have considered his selections unsuitable; but they always proved beneficial to the child, for they invariably sent her to sleep.

And Tim anxiously watched and trimmed that little lamp of life, whose flames wavered so whenever the cold easterly winds blew down the streets, or drove the choking smoke back into the room. Oil, oil, oil, and more oil, and more oil; and then for awhile the flame would brighten, and so would Tim, and chuckle and rub his hands, and stitch on night and day, as if trying to live without sleep. No mornings were too dark or too cold for Tim, who could wake to five minutes at three, four, or five o'clock in the morning; and there he would be, with open waistcoat, cross-legged upon his board, stitch—stitch—stitch, hour after hour, to make up for the time lost with little Pine.

How he reckoned minutes and hours between times, so that the medicine should be administered to the moment—an observance which he held to be

absolutely necessary to ensure efficacy, and more than once he was almost in agony for fear that Mrs. Ruggles should have administered a couple of doses too closely together. Never did doctor have nurse so exact in carrying out his instructions; and could attention have insured it, little Pine would soon have grown strong.

But it was not to be; the little eyes grew brighter, and the fragile form more thin day by day; day by day a weary listlessness crept over the child, while, as if compassionating her sufferings, nature was kind, and soothed her often with a gentle loving sleep.

More oil, and more again, and then a flicker and a leap up of the flame that had for days been sinking slowly. But the flashes, though bright, were evanescent, and he who trimmed oft felt his heart sink.

But Tim's despondency never lasted long. "She'll be better soon as the wind changes," he'd say; but the wind did change, and little Pine grew no better.

"Oil's not so strong as the last," then he would say; and the next time the stock grew low, he would trot off to a fresh chemist's, whose medicament would have but the same effect as the last. So Tim would try another, and another, until he had put every chemist within range under contribution; but with no better effect.

"I'm sure it aint so strong!" he'd exclaim half a dozen times a day, and then he would bring out his own bottle from underneath a little pile of cloth shreds, remove the cork, and apply the bottle neck first to one and then to the other nostril, shaking his head afterwards in the most learned manner, and vowing that it was the most cruel thing he knew to adulterate medicine.

Tim would even go so far as to feel little Pine's pulse, after the fashion of the dispensary doctor, when, having no watch, he would attentively gaze the while at the swinging pendulum of the old Dutch clock. And though it is extremely doubtful whether he could tell any difference in the child's pulse, yet he always seemed to derive a great deal of satisfaction from the proceeding.

But little Pine seldom complained, and then only softly to Tim, as she crept to him for comfort. She never hesitated to take from his hands her nauseous medicine, and day after day Tim carefully, anxiously trimmed the little lamp, which burned lower and lower, flickering in the socket, until such time as a harsher blast than usual should beat it out.

CHAPTER XXIV.—THE POOR-BOXES.

MRS. RUGGLES thought that it was her place, and said so; but Mr. Purkis was of opinion that it was his place, and he said so—bringing forward, too, the fact that he had looked after them ever since the new ones had been placed inside the north and south doors. And in spite of Mrs. Ruggles' opposition, the beadle still continued to polish the quaint imitation-antique steel hinges and claspings of the two little oak poor-boxes, while, to his great annoyance, Mrs. Ruggles used to go and rub them over again.

And very proud was Mr. Purkis of those boxes, and their meandering steel-work and corners, of

which there was so much that but little of the wood was left visible, and nearly all that was covered by the guards round the keyhole and slit where the charitable dropped their money through.

"You see, the place is so damp, sir," Mr. Purkis said to Jared; "and it's not in my constitution to let a woman like that Mrs. Ruggles go about and grin like a dog in the City, and sneer because there's a speck on the ornaments, and then pretend that she's so ashamed of their state that she's obliged to polish them up. But they're a mortal trouble to keep bright—they're as hard to keep bright as a man's conscience, sir; they tarnish like gold lace, although I've tried everything I know of, beginning with sand-paper, sir, and going down to Bath bricks and emery powder. Do you know, sir," he said, mysteriously, "it goes agen me to speak of her, she being, as it were, one of us; but, sir, it's my belief as she damps and moistens the steel on the sly, or spits upon them a purpose to aggravate my spirit, and make the things rust. In fact, I caught her agen one about a week ago. Every respect to you, sir; but I wish now as Mrs. Purkis had took the post, sir, for Mrs. Ruggles makes herself very okkard, and altogether she's a woman as Mrs. Purkis don't like; and I can assure you as a fact that when my missus takes a dislike to any one, that person aint worth much. You see, sir, she's a dry sort of a woman, and very hard; and if she was my wife I should never expect as there'd be any gravy with the meat for dinner. That's one of the great differences in wives, sir. Ruggles wouldn't never have been so full of wrinkles and furrers in his face if he'd had plenty of gravy. Look at me, sir; I'm a hearty man, work hard, and do a rattling good business in boots and shoes, principally ready-mades. I weigh seventeen stone, and I'm pretty happy, sir; and what's the reason? Gravy, sir, gravy. You never set down to our table without seeing plenty of gravy on it. Even when it's cold meat day, sir, there's always a little saved in a tea cup to eat with your potatoes. My wife was a cook, you know, sir, when I married her, and she well knows the vally of gravy. She won my heart with it, sir; and keeps it too. It's the real milk of human kindness. You never knew a woman who loved gravy, and liked to see others enjoy it, leather a child as that woman leathers that child of theirs. Ruggles thinks she's a wonder, and of course it would be a sin to deceive him; but I'm pretty sure of one thing, and that is that there's never any gravy to speak of on Ruggles' table."

And after his long speech, Mr. Purkis, who had just come home very moist and oozy from the church, after having a good polish at the poor boxes, handed Jared the church keys for him to go and practise.

It was not very far from Purkis's boot and shoe emporium to St. Runwald's, and when Jared reached the gates he stood looking round for his boy, the invisible Ichabod, who was of a very mercurial temperament, and, if first upon the spot, given to indulgence in overing or standing upon one leg on tombstones, walking at the risk of being impaled, round the iron railings of the family vaults, swarming up the rain-water pipes, and turning himself into a living gargyle; throwing stones into the mouths

of the corbels, and breaking the windows; carving his initials in the mouldering stone, where "I. G." could often be seen, but more often with another letter added, greatly to Ichabod's disgust, by evil-disposed street boys, who mocked at his costume generally and pulled his "tawsel" cap. The consequence was that the word "PIG" graced the walls of the old church in several places. Before now Ichabod had been upon the roof, and marked out the size of his shoe with a knife-point in the soft lead; he had been upon the top of the tower, and amongst the bells, and down in the vaults, where, he told his schoolfellows, he had seen a live ghost; and the only wonder was that in all Ichabod's travels he had never been mutilated or killed.

Jared Pellet looked for him east and west—north into the porch, and south towards the street; but there was no Ichabod. So he shook his head, and told himself that Ichabod was a bad boy—a fact which he had taken into consideration scores of times before; and then, applying the large key, he entered the church and swung to the door.

The moment after entering Jared started as if alarmed, for there, close beside him, stood a figure in the dim aisle, but he recovered himself instantly upon seeing that it was only the old vicar, whilst behind him stood Churchwarden Timson; and then it was that Jared saw that they had been emptying the poor-box.

"How do, Mr. Pellet? Nice day," said the vicar, cordially. Then, turning to the churchwarden, "Must be something more, Mr. Timson; feel again."

Mr. Timson lifted the lid of the little steel-bound chest, and thrust in a fat hand, feeling about in all directions, as if chasing active coins into dark corners, for them to dodge through his fingers and escape again. His face was quite a study as he poked about; but at length he drew forth his hand, looked at it on both sides, and declared that there was nothing more.

"Tut—tut—tut!" exclaimed the vicar. "How strange! Why, I felt sure that I put in a sovereign myself. It must have been last time, and yet I felt so sure; and—and—yes—to be sure! Here it is—'Sunday, 24th day, one pound.' There," he continued, triumphantly, "I knew I did; and yet there's nothing else here but silver and copper. Are you sure that you felt well, Mr. Timson? Feel again," he said, good temperedly.

And again the fat hand went to work, and the face looked more solid, but without success.

"Must have been in the other box," he said at last.

The vicar brightened up at this, and they crossed the church to the north door; but, from the scraps of conversation Jared Pellet heard when he reached the organ-loft, it was evident that the quest was without result. Through waiting for the boy, Jared soon dropped into one of his dreary moods, and became forgetful of things outward, until Ichabod arrived out of breath, as if he had been exerting himself strenuously to get to the church in time, when the building was soon once more resounding with strains which drowned the rattling of keys and snapping of locks, as well as the conversation of vicar and churchwarden upon the subject of the

missing money; but for all that the conversation went on.

"There might have been a great deal taken," said the vicar.

"Heaps!" acquiesced Mr. Timson.

"For, of course," said Mr. Gray, "this is an exceptional time, and in other instances I doubt whether I should be able to miss anything."

"Very true. Quite agree with you," said Mr. Timson. "Just as you say."

"Pounds might have been abstracted," said the vicar.

"Abstract—an epitome, a taking from," muttered Mr. Timson. "Yes, just so, pounds. Very true, sir."

"Hang it all, Timson!—don't be so aggravating," said the vicar, pettishly. "What is the good of agreeing with one in everything—it can't do any good?"

"Just so, sir," said Mr. Timson; and then turning very red and hot, "No, sir, of course not; but can't do any harm."

"There, for goodness' sake come into the vestry."

And he led the way into the little robing-room, to count the offerings of the charitable.

"Now, are you sure about that sovereign?" said Mr. Timson to the vicar, as they passed down the nave.

"Sure!" exclaimed the vicar, "have I not shown you the entry? But I suppose I must have made a mistake."

"Of course you have," said Timson, triumphantly.

"For it is impossible," continued the vicar, "for any one to have obtained access to the money; and surely no one would be so cruel as to rob the poor, eh? What do you think? Calmly and considerately, now."

"Just ——" Mr. Timson cut the "so" off, and rubbed the side of his nose, and looked mysterious. Then, resting one finger upon the vicar's black silk vest, he said, "Once upon a time my desk was robbed—over and over again, without being broken open; and I put in marked money, and still it went; but I found the party out by that plan. And how do you think they got at the money, sir?"

"Crooked wire through the crack?" said the vicar.

"No, no: false keys," said Mr. Timson, wagging his head—"false keys; and it was some one who had constant access to my office that did it."

The vicar mused, and figeted his neck in his stiff cravat, as involuntarily he turned over in his own mind the list of persons who had private access to the church—clerk, pew-opener, beadle, curate, organist, organ-blower, churchwardens, himself; and then he shook his head again, and the pair proceeded to count the money over once more upon the vestry table, calculated the total in silver and copper, made entries, and then tied the money carefully up in a little bag; and all to the accompaniment of Jared's music, which ever and again made the windows of the little vestry to rattle loudly.

"Fine organist, Mr. Pellet," said the vicar, after listening for a few minutes. "We were lucky in getting him, Timson."

"Very fine; quite agree with you," said Mr. Timson. "Capital congregations we get too, now; almost double what they were in old Harvey's time."

"Um!" ejaculated the vicar, with a curious dry look upon his features.

"Just so, sir!" said Mr. Timson, "You see people like music, and will come miles to hear it."

"Well, yes—I suppose so," said the vicar, half sadly; "and ours certainly is a very fine instrument."

"And beautifully played," said Mr. Timson. "Not but what I think we have too much of it. But people say it is well played."

"Yes," said the vicar, absently—for his thoughts were upon the poor box—"beautifully played, certainly. By the way, how startled Mr. Pellet seemed when he came in."

"Poor man, yes—he's nervous," said Timson; "those musical chaps generally are. Didn't expect us, you know. Might ask his opinion about the box."

"Yes, we might, certainly," said the vicar; and then, uneasily, "No, I don't think it would be of any use. Let it rest for the present, Mr. Timson. Perhaps, after all, we may be mistaken."

"Very true, sir," said Timson. "Not often that there is gold in the box. People are not very fond of giving to the poor and lending to the Lord, though that's all of a piece with their behaviour—they're not fond of lending to anybody; seems to go against a man's nature."

"Not in all cases, Mr. Timson," said the vicar, stiffly. "There are exceptions; yourself, for instance."

"Present company—present company, sir," said Mr. Timson, "always left out of the question."

And Mr. Timson looked very fidgety and uncomfortable.

"Not in a case of this description," said the vicar. "A shining light should never be placed beneath a bushel."

Mr. Timson looked very much unlike a shining light at this time, as he stared at the vicar, and then round the church; then fidgeted from foot to foot, and held his hat first in one hand and then in the other, as if in a great hurry to go; but Mr. Gray would not come out of the vestry, and Mr. Timson had to go in again, for he could not be spared yet. In fact, asking him for the bag once more, the vicar again carefully went through the amount of small change—copper, threepenny and fourpenny pieces, sixpences, shillings, and florins—to see whether, after all, his sovereign might not be there, explaining the while to Mr. Timson that some gold was very pale and, in dim lights, like that where they were, sovereigns looked almost like shillings.

But though he carefully examined every shilling, and turned it over, there was not one that could for an instant be taken for a sovereign; so, with a sigh, the vicar slowly told up the total, replaced the money in the bag, and tied it exceedingly tightly, before once more handing it to the churchwarden, when together they slowly passed down the nave, listening to Jared's harmonies.

But the vicar seemed uneasy; the music had lost its charm; and instead of following his usual custom, and seating himself in some comfortable pew to listen for half an hour, he slowly followed the churchwarden into the street, and went homewards,

shaking his head, that head being the while sorely troubled with thoughts of sacrilege and his sovereign.

CHAPTER XXV.—JARED'S HOME.

"WELL, Mr. Ruggles, and how is little Pine?" said Mrs. Jared, entering the room in Duplex-street, where industrious Tim was busily at work.

"Don't know what to say, ma'am," said Tim. "But somehow I fancy she's better since I changed her oil. This one seems to agree with her different to what the last did. Oils varies a deal."

"No doubt," said Mrs. Jared, smiling; "but I should have more faith in keeping her well wrapped up, and out of the night air."

"I do keep her out of it, ma'am," said Tim, talking away, but busy still over his work. "I take all the care I can of her; but what we want is warm weather to bring her round. Spring's what we want, and there's such a very little of it here in London when it does come. It's like everything else in London, ma'am—terribly adulterated. The oil's adulterated, the milk's adulterated, bread's adulterated, everything is, ma'am, more or less, that we poor people buy, and I know we pay ten per cent. more for our things, ma'am, than the rich do; while, because things aint bad enough for us, we get our fresh air stale and fouled with blacks. As for our spring, what we get of it, that's all adulterated with cold, biting easterly winds. Spring seems to me, ma'am, to get shorter every year; but for all that I shall be glad when the spring does come."

And then, to give emphasis to his remarks, Tim brought his iron down thump upon the floor where he was seated.

Then there was a busy pause, during which time Jared was inspecting the lungs of a concertina, and by means of his glue-pot fixing soft patches of leather inside, where failing spots were visible; Mrs. Jared dividing her time between helping Patty over some garment and nursing the youngest Pellet.

"Strange thing this—terribly strange thing this, about our poor-box, isn't it?" said Jared. "Seems that there's no mistake about it, but that it has been robbed again and again. Mrs. Ruggles told you, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir, yes," said Tim. "Quite startled me, it did; but there, Lord bless you, sir, there's people in this great London of ours who'd rob themselves, let alone other people, or church, or poor-boxes."

"Ah," said Jared, "it is startling. Mr. Timson's been talking to me about it; sovereign of the vicar's one time, half-a-crown another, crown piece another. No doubt about it: for it seems Mr. Gray's been trying experiments."

"Experiments?" said Mrs. Jared.

"Yes, setting traps to find out the offender."

"But surely it must be a mistake," said Patty. "No one would be so wicked as to rob a church."

"Well, I don't know, my dear; money's money," says Jared, "and your uncle Richard says it's about everything. There are plenty of people who value money more than religion."

Jared was silent for business reasons now, since

he was holding a piece of leather in his mouth, his hands being occupied by the concertina bellows and glue-brush.

"You're about right, sir," put in Tim, who was busy over a shrinking operation upon one of Jared's waistcoats, an operation which left room for the eliding of the worn parts, so that it might fit a smaller person. "No idea, I s'pose, of who it could be, sir?"

"Not the slightest," replied Jared, after placing his piece of leather *in situ*, and then preparing with his scissors a scrap for another part. "Glad if I did; for the rascal deserves to be punished. A man who would rob the poor would rob—would—would do anything. Stir the fire under the glue-pot, Patty, my dear. Puts one in mind of a camp kettle, don't it?" he said, as Patty stirred the glowing coals, and made the flames dance about the little vessel hung from a hook in the chimney.

The little iron kettle began to sing, and Tim raised his eyes above his spectacles to peer round the room, before taking a fresh grip of the garment upon which he was employed.

"Does he love me—does he love me?" Patty's heart seemed to throb. Her mother's lessons about dignity and respect to self were all quite right, she knew; but, oh! if she might but write to him, and tell him how she longed to see him once again, how dearly she loved him, and how he had truly won her simple, little, trusting heart!

Very wrong, sadly unfeminine, no doubt; but then Patty had lived in a house all her life with parents who were quite homely and natural. She, too, was simple, pure-hearted, and natural. Foolish too, no doubt, some will say; but in such folly there is a happiness far above that ever enjoyed by the wisest of earth. And Patty did not think it folly; for to her Harry was quite a hero—"a man in a thousand men"—while she felt herself more lonely day by day.

"Oh, if I had only been rich too, and had money!" thought Patty; and then she started, for Jared suddenly spoke again.

"Ah, it's a strange thing about that money. Poor Mr. Gray's in a sad way about it. He named it to me; says it's so grievous, and that he thought more of the crime than of the value of the money twenty times over."

CHAPTER XXVI.—TIMSON'S CONSISTENCY.

JARED PELLET was right. Mr. Gray was in a sad way about the affair, for it seemed a problem that he was not likely to solve. At first he had made a point of keeping the matter secret; but as months slipped by, and no discovery was made, he ceased to be reticent. Nothing was learned as to the cause: but the effect was plain enough—the money still went. He held long consultations with Mr. Timson; and together, more than before, they set to and suspected everybody connected with the church, beginning laughingly with themselves, and then going downwards through the other churchwardens, Jared, the clerk, Purkis, Mrs. Ruggles, Ichabod Gunnis, and the bell-ringers, who never entered the church; but though every one was suspected in turn, no accusation was made, for, said the vicar—

"Timson, I would not, in my weak, short-sighted way, be guilty of an act of injustice to any man."

"Why not set the police to work?" said Mr. Timson. "A detective would furridge the matter out."

"No," said the vicar, "I don't like the idea. I would not care if they'd rob me, Timson; but they will not, and this business is something I really cannot get over. If I put more in the box to make up what I reckon may be the deficiency, it seems to make no difference; and though your advice may be good, I don't feel as if I could take it. I have acted upon some of your hints, but still we don't find out any clue."

Mr. Timson shook his head, and said "Just so," which might have meant anything.

After smoking a pipe or two, the churchwarden always left, declaring that he had got hold of the right end of the thread, and that he intended following up the clue—telling it mysteriously, and promising news by the next visit. For, being old and single, the vicar thought it no shame to play nightly at cribbage with the churchwarden, and in his company to smoke long clay pipes and drink whisky and water. But the only result of Mr. Timson's clue-following was the getting of himself into a tangle; and, to the vicar's great disgust, he would seriously settle the offence upon a fresh head each time.

"I tell you what it is, Timson," he would exclaim, pettishly, after listening for some time to the rumbling of the churchwarden's mountain, and then being rewarded with no grand discovery, but a very mouse of an information—"I tell you what it is, Timson, you're getting into your dotage."

"No, I aint," said Timson, gruffly. For Mr. Timson's life had two phases. As Mr. Timson, tea-dealer, and Mr. Timson, vicar's churchwarden, he metaphorically wore his tradesman's apron, fastened behind by a brass heart and a steel hook, and said "Sir" to the world at large; while as Mr. Timson, the worthy old bachelor, who could have retired any day, and smoked pipes and played cribbage at his own or the vicar's residence, he was another man, and as sturdy and independent as an Englishman need be. "No, I aint," he said, gruffly. "I'm sure now as can be that it's old Purkis—a fat, canting, red-faced, hypocritical old sinner."

"Don't be so aggravating, Timson," said the vicar. "How can you accuse him?"

"Why, what does he mean by always hanging about the boxes, and polish, polish, polishing them till the steel-work grows quite thin?"

"That proves nothing," said the vicar.

"Don't it?" exclaimed the churchwarden. "It proves that he has always been hanging about, till the money tempted him, and he could not resist it."

"Nonsense," said the vicar, crossly, as he broke a piece off his pipe. "Why, the very last time you were here you were quite sure that it was Pellet."

"Well, and so I'll be bound to say that it was," said Timson. "I was sure of it last week; only you would not have it that I was right."

"Of course not," said the vicar, "when you de-

clared only two days before that it was the organ-boy, whom you had caught spending money. How much did he spend?"

"Well, only a halfpenny at a potato-can, certainly, then," said Timson; "but he must have been flush of money."

"Pish!" ejaculated the vicar, contemptuously. "Nonsense!"

"Ah, you may say 'pish!' exclaimed Timson, angrily; "but it isn't nonsense. The money goes, don't it? And they're all in it, every man Jack of 'em; it's a regular conspiracy."

"I never, in all my experience, met with a less consistent man than you are, Timson," said the vicar. "I believe you would accuse me as soon as look at me, and then give some one else into custody for the theft."

"No, I shouldn't," grumbled Mr. Timson. "We should have found it all out by this time, only you will be so obstinate. I'd soon find it out, if I had my way."

"I do wish you would have a little more charity in you, Timson," said the vicar, taking up and dealing the cards. "I honestly believe that if it had not been for me you would have made two or three homes wretched by accusing people of the theft."

"No business to steal poor-box money, then," said Mr. Timson, through his nose, for his hands were occupied with his cards, while his lips were tightly closed over the waxey end of his pipe. "It was Pellet, I'm sure."

"No more Pellet than it was Purkis," said the vicar. "I never knew a more quiet, respectable man."

"Nor a better organist, if he wouldn't be so long-winded," said Mr. Timson, coolly.

"Nor a better organist," acquiesced the vicar. "Fifteen-six and six are a dozen," he continued, throwing down his cards.

"Three, and one for his nob," said Mr. Timson, following the example of his host, "and that's what I should give him, Mr. Gray, if I knew who it was."

"Humph!" ejaculated the vicar, thoughtfully.

But in spite of his thoughtfulness he came no nearer to his point, and in the course of time the Rev. John Gray was distant, and then in manner apologetic, to all St. Runwald's officials. He even went so far as to send the little asthmatical old razor-faced clerk a present, so as to set his own mind at rest for having judged him hastily. He had fresh locks placed upon the boxes—locks with cunningly-devised keys, which the makers assured him it was impossible to imitate; but a fortnight had not elapsed before the boxes were plundered again—the culprit evidently growing bolder with success.

The vicar grew more and more anxious. He was in dread now that the communion plate might be taken; and, lest a raid should be made upon it, he watched it himself to and from the churchwarden's house.

At times, too, the vicar would feel almost disposed to take his friend's advice, and call in the aid of the police; but even then he did not feel certain of success, and shrank from such stringent measures on

account of the publicity. And besides, he wished to detect the culprit himself, and take him to task; for, said he, his own conscience would be sufficient punishment so soon as he was detected.

In Duplex-street the vicar's words were well taken into consideration, as the affair was also loudly canvassed, Tim Ruggles the while listening attentively, and giving his opinion when asked, otherwise perfectly silent, until, as he called it, he was set going.

"I like clergymen sometimes," said Tim, "and sometimes I don't; but this vicar of ours seems a man worth knowing. Mrs. Ruggles says, sir, it's a pleasure to have anything to do with him, and she's a great judge of character, sir. But there are some parsons I never could like, for they're as easy and plausible as country solicitors, and that's saying a great deal. But really it does seem a wonder that this little matter is not found out. I'll talk to Mrs. Ruggles about it to-night. Wonderful woman!—I like to hear her opinion; full of point and keenness."

Conversation was here stayed by a terrible vocal explosion upstairs, accompanied by cries for mother; the cause being that a juvenile member of the Pellet family had choked himself with an angular fragment of pudding, given to it by Mrs. Jared to keep it out of mischief—a cold, heavy pudding, of a most economical texture, frequently made in Jared's establishment, and called by him "extinguisher," from its wondrous power of putting out appetite to the last faint spark.

A due amount of patting and shaking sufficed to place the little sufferer in its normal state; and mother and father once more descended, to find Tim Ruggles ready for starting homeward, after exhibiting a newly-made pair of trousers—his first—upon the young gentleman for whom they were intended.

"Yes, sir," said Tim, suddenly taking up in a most unexpected manner the principal subject of the evening's conversation, "I'll have a long talk to Mrs. Ruggles about it; and if I might ask it as a favour of you and Mrs. Pellet, sir, please don't send anything any more for little Pine. I'm so much obliged, and thank you kindly; but Mrs. Ruggles, sir, is a little bit particular upon some points, and just perhaps the least touch proud. I know you won't be offended with me for telling you."

Mrs. Jared, who had on several occasions sent little delicacies that she thought the child might fancy—poor people's delicacies—promised, and Tim left; and, probably from the sharp look-out Mrs. Ruggles kept after the conversation she had with her husband, for quite a month the vicar enjoyed peace of mind, from a feeling that the poor-box had not been disturbed.

"And a good job, too," said Mr. Timson one evening, "for I'm quite sick of hearing sermons and texts about pieces of money—Render unto Cæsar, or Current money of the merchant, or Achan's covetousness, or the Judas pieces of silver. You know, it only did harm—acting like charity sermons, and making people get money ready, expecting to see a plate held at the door, and then, only naturally, dropping it into the poor-box, so as to give more

plunder to the thief, who has been laughing at you all the time."

"For shame, Timson!" said the old man, sternly; "don't you think that even thieves have consciences?"

"Humph! well, I don't know," said Timson; "perhaps they have, but they don't keep them from stealing. But I thought you said you would keep the subject out of your sermons."

The vicar did not reply; but his eyes twinkled, and a dry little crease or two appeared in the corners by his mouth.

CHAPTER XXVII.—MRS. JARED'S OPINIONS.

FULLY under the impression that it is not mentioned in "Things not generally known," I venture here to assert that the reason why poverty is so bearable is that those who are so poor seldom have time to think about it. If, now, they had the leisure of the wealthy, it would be a hard case for them, and our asylums for the insane would have to be doubled in size; but being constantly engaged in a struggle with the grim monster, their time is too fully taken up to give them much opportunity for lamenting. It seems hard, certainly, when a man gives the whole of his mind—perhaps not a capacious mind, but one of a fair average ability—to the obtaining of a sufficiency of cash to provide for the daily wants of his family—it seems hard that his mind should be racked and diverted from its course by the petty troubles incident upon a small income. Yet so it was here; and when Jared Pellet heard of the poor-box robberies, he could not help a sort of shiver as he thought to himself that it must be the work of some poor hunger-driven sufferer.

Now, when I said above "a small income," pray do not for a moment imagine that I mean what is termed a small income by novelists, and genteel people in the ordinary walks of life. I mean fifty pounds a year, aided and augmented by an occasional five shillings for tuning a piano, odd sixpences for new notes in concertinas, trifles by way of commission on music bought for customers, and various other little things fought for by Jared in his endeavours to make both ends meet—making them lap over was a feat he never dreamed of in his most soaring fits.

But he never grumbled, neither did Mrs. Jared, but bustled busily, always aided and abetted by Patty; so that this branch of the Pellet family only existed—vegetated—what you will—in the present of Duplex-street: they lived in the future of the good time coming.

Talk about a helpmate; no man could have had a better or more ingenious wife than Jared; though, to be just, some part of her ingenuity must have been due to her conscience, which was always uneasy concerning the number of keen little arrows she had placed in Jared's quiver. She often said it was a bad job, but it couldn't be helped; and then she would set to work industriously to polish up, sharpen, and well feather the aforesaid little arrows; while she kept school for the home pupils, and instilled the first principles of elementary education, Mrs. Jared looking up occasionally from her tasks.

Now, Mrs. Jared's tasks were many, and she often used to assert that her strong point was cooking, opportunities for proving which were not wanting; and the changes she would ring upon two sauce-pans, a frying-pan, some potatoes, and a bit of dripping were something startling. Irish stew was a very strong point with Mrs. Jared; but then, with their income, Irish stew could not often be thought of; and by means of inculcating content, and teaching that mashed potatoes, meat pies made of pieces, or hard dumplings and treacle, were great treats, Jared's children looked upon far less luxurious living as that suited for everyday life, and grew and thrived upon it too.

"There's a wonderful deal in management," Mrs. Jared said.

But in spite of all her management and cleanliness, there never were such noses as Jared's younger children possessed. Certainly, the little ones sniffed vigorously; but there must certainly have been a something chilling in the poverty of their home, or else in the air of Duplex-street, Clerkenwell, for from morning till night Patty and her mother would be constantly flying at the chubby little objects, handkerchief in hand, to staunch the perennial cold springs of their heads.

But there was so much in management, Mrs. Jared said; and that needle of hers would have been a formidable opponent for a sewing machine. Tim Ruggles would always cut out small coats, small vests, and small trousers from large old ones, ingeniously contriving to leave out the worn parts; and these cuttings Mrs. Jared would fit together, after a vast amount of puzzling and scheming as to where this triangle of cloth went, where that rhomboid fitted, and so on; while it must be owned that more than once parts did get a little wrong; so that, in spite of pressing with no end of hot irons, the fit was not perfect until some unpicking had been executed, involving a considerable amount of re-making. Patty's dresses and her own were as a rule bought new, but made at home, after a due amount of cutting out and pinning on of newspaper patterns—ideas of a fashionable character being derived from people passing. Then, as a matter of course, these dresses would be worn—worn in, and, at last, worn out. And that would be the end of them? Don't make a mistake, pray. That was only the beginning of them; for Mrs. Jared always purchased self-coloured or small-patterned fabrics, so that when they were turned, and a little scheming had been gone through, why, the dresses were as good as new, and had to be worn out once more; when, upon reference to the other side by means of a slit in the lining, it could be seen in a moment that the inner surface was much cleaner-looking than the outer, and as the winter was coming on, when, as everybody knows, days are dark in Clerkenwell, why, the dresses would bear turning again, and would not show a bit. Then they would be once more worn out; and now you'll say that they were done for. Not a bit of it. They had not reached middle age yet; for though not available for out-of-door wear, by means of a little manipulative scheming and conjuring, plaits would be re-formed, with old mountains turned into valleys, and the old valleys turned into mountains. Then a

breadth would be taken out of the skirt to make a new bodice, linings would be washed, stiffened and ironed, and there you were again: busy fingers and scheming brains had produced you by domestic chemistry a couple of dresses that made Jared shiver at the idea of new clothes and extra expense as he saw the neat appearance of wife and daughter, until he heard the piece of new braid for trimming only cost ninepence-halfpenny for the two dresses.

Done now, at all events, after this wearing out, you'll say. Only middle age now, though the bodies were rather gone. But there were skirts to be worn as skirts, with some fresh contrivance for jacket above them; and this state of existence lasted for some months, when, taking a fresh form in the shape of some peculiar under-garment, they disappeared from view for many months, dived out of sight as it were, though from having seen Mrs. Jared busy over them, we know that there were strong waistbands and strings—But, hold! enough! Months would again elapse, and then Lizzy and Lyddy would be proudly walking to church in new frocks, which they would wear till they grew out of them, as if kindly to make way for two younger sisters; while, when they in turn had grown out of the little garments, was there not the baby? And besides, when parents had achieved to the honour of being at the head of a family verging somewhere upon a round dozen, was it not within the range of probability that they might ultimately own to a tribe numbering close upon a score, so that Jared might not only not be ashamed when he met his enemy in the gate, but even look upon him with triumphant aspect, the more especially if that enemy happened to be the wolf so fond of lying down at his door, and in spite of whose attacks he had contrived, with the aid of Mrs. Jared's "management," to feed and clothe his numerous progeny.

But there, it is not so much, after all, to praise the skill displayed by Patty and her mother at dress-making. Every true British woman is clever with one of those little bright, sharp, patent drilled-eyed, or egg-eyed, or somehow improved needles, whose sharp scratch is so familiar to all as it rasps over the thimble; and, after all said and done, I don't know when woman looks to greater advantage than when, with quiet earnest aspect, she is bending over some hem upon whose edge stitch after stitch appears—no, they do not, for they are almost invisible, those little fastenings looped in by her thread. I do not revert here to her who labours "with fingers weary and worn," but to one in some quiet, homely home, where misery dares not set a foot. But Mrs. Jared was clever at everything that could be done with needle and thread, besides cutting and contriving in the most extraordinary way. Children's boots and shoes she would mend in the most exemplary manner, so long as the failing spot was in the upper-leather; if it was in the sole, the aid of Jared and his hammer and tacks, or glue-pot and buff leather, would be called in; and Jared himself was no contemptible schemer, as was proved by the respectable appearance they kept up upon so small an income.

Some young ladies grow pale and thin when their hearts are touched, and they have sorrow to contend with; and, no doubt, if little Patty had been more

highly educated, more refined, and had no more engrossing occupations than reading and paying visits, she, too, would have worn a Mariana-like aspect, and sighed more frequently; but, though she often wept in secret, hers was so busy a life that she had but little time to mourn. And though she sat and sighed, and suffered, too, most keenly, her little cheeks, somehow, would not grow pale nor less plump, and the sorrow was hidden away deeply in her heart. Mrs. Jared knew a great deal, and kept finding out more and more, but the subject was tabooed; and though her tender heart yearned to condole with Patty, and try to comfort her, yet long talks with Jared had schooled her to be silent, and poor Patty had no comfort.

"Poor girl! I know she feels it keenly," said Mrs. Jared.

"Not she," said Jared. "It must be nearly forgotten by this time."

"Did I forget you, years ago?" said Mrs. Jared, severely.

"Too good a memory, my dear," said Jared, smiling.

"Then don't talk such nonsense," said his wife. "What ideas you men do have of women's hearts, just because now and then you meet with some silly, flighty, coquettish thing, not without a heart, certainly, but with one that is worthless. Do you suppose that all girls' hearts are counterfeit coin?"

"Not I," said Jared, "but it won't do. It's just as I thought at the time, and it always is the case with those red-hot, sanguine fellows. All very well at first, but they cool down gradually, and then it's all over. We've heard nothing of him since."

"I'm afraid there must be something wrong," said Mrs. Jared—"illness, or something."

"Wrong! well, yes, I suppose so," said Jared, "if it's wrong to get rich. It was wrong of him to talk to our poor girl in the way he did; and it's wrong of her to dream of it, if she still does; and it was wrong of you to expect anything would come of it but sorrow; and it was wrong—wrong—"

"Wrong of you to go on talking in that way," said Mrs. Jared, impetuously; "and, for my part, I don't believe that it is as you say. There's some misfortune or something happened him, or—"

"Don't for goodness' sake talk in that way to her," said Jared, "or you'll complete the mischief. It's as well as it is, and the sooner she forgets it all the better. Nothing could ever have come of it, and I should never have given my consent, even if he had kept to his professed determination. Richard would always have been annoyed, and goodness knows there's estrangement enough between us, without our doing anything to increase the distance."

"Richard's a selfish—"

"Hush! don't, please," said Jared, with a pained look; and he laid his hand gently upon his wife's lips, when, smoothing his forehead, she exclaimed—

"Well, I won't then; but it does make me angry when I think of his money, and then of how poor we are; while somehow, the poorer we get, the more tiresome the children grow. You've no conception how cross they are at times."

"Haven't I?" said Jared, drily.

"No," said Mrs. Jared, impetuously. "How can you have?"

"Did you wash the children this morning, my dear?" said Jared.

"Wash them! why, of course I did."



"Notice anything peculiar between their shoulders; any strange, sprouting growth?"

"Goodness, gracious, no!" exclaimed Mrs. Pellet with a shudder. "Why, what do you mean? Surely there's no dreadful infectious thing about for which they are sickening. But what do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing," said Jared, coolly; "only you seemed under the impression that the little ones were or ought to be angels, and I was anxious to hear of the advent of sprouting wings."

"Stuff!" ejaculated Mrs. Jared; and then directly after, "Just look here at Totty's boots."

"Well, they are on the go," said Jared, turning the little leather understandings in his hands.

"On the go!" said his wife—"why, they've quite gone. It does seem such a thing, when he's rolling in riches."

"Who? Totty?" said Jared, innocently.

"Stuff!" said Mrs. Jared, in her impetuous way; "why, Richard, to be sure. He could buy oceans of boots and never feel the loss."

"Very true," said Jared, without pausing to think what number of pairs would form oceans; "but then, my dear, he'd have no Tottys to put in them."

"And a good thing, too," said Mrs. Jared, "seeing what an expense they are."

"I don't know that, my dear," said Jared, softly. "They are an expense, certainly, and it does seem hard upon us; but I don't know, after all, but what ours is the happier home."

"The man came for the poor-rate to-day," said Mrs. Jared, melting, but still frigid.

"That's nothing new, my dear," said Jared; "he's always coming. Our little ones are healthy, and strong, and happy."

"Have you thought about the rent being nearly due?" said Mrs. Jared, who would not give in yet.

"Yes," said Jared, "I have thought about it, for I never get a chance of forgetting it, my dear. It always seems to me that there are eight quarters in poor people's years. But as I was saying about the children: they are happy and merry, and the doctor comes seldom—that is," he said, with a comical look, "with exceptions, my dear, with exceptions."

Mrs. Jared tried to knit her brows and frown, but she could not, for the corner of a smile would peep out at one angle of her mouth; and somehow or another, as they sat alone by the fire that night, Jared's arm crept round his wife's waist, and her head went down upon his shoulder.

"Plenty of them," said Jared, "certainly; but I don't think you would like to part with any one of them."

"Oh! how can you?" ejaculated Mrs. Jared; and she quite shivered at the thought.

"And I never saw you obliged to make chest-warmers for them because they were delicate, or compelled to get cod liver oil for them because they were thin and weak, and——"

"Oh! don't talk so, pray," exclaimed Mrs. Jared. "That poor child; it gives me the heart-ache to see her, when Ruggles brings her with him. I'd give almost anything to have the poor thing here for the little time she's for this world."

"Think she's so bad as that?" said Jared.

"Oh, yes; her poor little bones show so dreadfully. I don't think she's neglected, for Ruggles is too good-hearted for that; but that dreadful woman would almost keep her from getting well. Now, if we had her with ours, and——"



"Didn't you say the collector called to-day?" said Jared.

"Yes," said Mrs. Jared—"had her here with ours, and Patty and I attended well to her, she might get through the winter, and—what did you say?"

"I didn't speak," said Jared, "I was only thinking about the rent."

"And besides," said Mrs. Jared, "as she is so young—"

"How much would a pair of boots cost for Totty?" said Jared.

"Really it is too bad," exclaimed Mrs. Jared; "and I can't help thinking about the poor little thing."

"And how well and hearty our own are, even if we are poor," said Jared.

So Mrs. Jared sighed, and contrived to put a patch on the side of Totty's boots, and they lasted for another week.

CHAPTER XXVIII.—BETWEEN FRIENDS.

FOR quite a month, as far as the vicar could tell, the poor-boxes had rest, and Mr. Timson's ears were not quite so much troubled with the objectionable texts. Divers games of cribbage were played, and divers pipes and glasses of gin and water enjoyed, as the late robberies were discussed. During these discussions the vicar would enlighten his crony upon the subject of the various little plans he had adopted to see whether the boxes had been opened. But the matter was discussed as well at Purkis's and Ruggles's, and also at Duplex-street, the same verdict being arrived at in each house—namely, that it was very strange.

Mrs. Purkis thought she could fit the cap on the right head if she had to do with the matter, and Mr. Purkis told her to hold her tongue. Mrs. Ruggles, too, gave a sidewise look at her husband, and told him that it was not her business, but she could give a very shrewd guess at the culprit; though when pressed, she only nipped her lips together very tightly, and said never mind. As for Mrs. Jared, she only declared it to be very sad, and then the matter was almost forgotten.

The matter was almost forgotten, too, by the vicar, until one morning when he hurried into Mr. Timson's counting-house, looking so put out that the churchwarden directly guessed what was the matter, and before his friend could say a word, exclaimed—

"You don't mean it, sir?"

"But I do mean it, Mr. Timson," exclaimed the vicar; "and really," he continued, poking at the ink-stand with the ferule of his umbrella—"and really, I should be glad if you would not treat this matter so lightly, sir. It grieves me very, very deeply, Mr. Timson, I can assure you."

"Mind the ink, sir," said Mr. Timson, placing the bright metal stand out of his visitor's reach. "I don't treat it lightly, sir. It's no joke, and I'm as much put out as yourself. You don't think I want the poor-box robbed, do you, sir?"

And he spoke with a puffy, short move between every two or three words, as if getting warm.

"Now don't be rash, Timson—don't be rash. I'm not angry; only really, you know, it is so worrying—so aggravating—deuced aggravating. If I were a layman, Timson, I should indeed—There, there; now don't bristle up, there's a good fellow; but tell me what to do."

"Take that umbrella ferule out of my ink, that's what you'd better do," said Timson, gruffly.

For in an absent fashion the vicar was still thrusting at the metal stand, to the great endangering of an open book or two upon the table.

"There, there, then," said the vicar, impatiently, as he placed the obnoxious ferule upon the floor, and pressed it down there with both hands. "Now, then, tell me, Timson, what had I better do?"

"How the devil should I know what you ought to do?" exclaimed Timson.

For he was out of temper that morning with business matters, connected with a sudden rise in teas just at a time when his stock was low, in consequence of his anticipating a fall. Consequently, the vicar, in his impatient mood, had applied the match which exploded Mr. Timson's wrath, and, metaphorically taking off his apron, he spoke up.

"Don't swear, Timson," said the vicar, severely. "Swear not—you know the rest."

"Shoo—shoo—shoo—shoo—shoo—shoo—shoo!" ejaculated Mr. Timson. "Who did swear?"

"Why, you did, sir," said the vicar; "and don't deny it."

"But I didn't," exclaimed the churchwarden; "and I won't be spoken to like that in my own house. Because we have been friends all these years, John Gray, you presume upon it, and abuse me. I didn't swear. I only said 'How the devil should I know?' and I say it again. Shoo, shoo, shoo! the devil's in the poor-box."

"If you make use of such language, Levi Timson, I must leave your office," said the vicar, severely.

"What language—what language?" exclaimed the churchwarden.

"Why, such as yours, sir," retorted the vicar; "introducing the father of evil every moment."

"Not I—not I!" exclaimed Timson. "Introduce him? Not I. Who brought him into the room? Who began it? Who said it first?"

"But only in a modified form," said the vicar, humbly—"I qualified it strongly with an if. But I was wrong—extremely wrong, Timson; and there, I beg your pardon, Timson, I was put out, and annoyed, and spoke hastily."

And he held out his hand.

"No, sir—no, sir; you don't beg mine," said Timson, putting on his apron again, and then taking the vicar's hand. "I beg yours, sir. I was angry and put out, and spoke hastily; for, confound 'em, teas are up."

"But I was in the wrong, Timson," said the vicar. "As a clergyman, I ought to have governed myself, and known better than to be hasty."

"I won't give up in my own premises, sir," exclaimed Timson. "Now, don't smile, sir, they are mine—bought and paid for; and there are the writings in that safe. I was in the wrong, for teas are up horribly this morning, and I'd been reckoning on their going down."

Peace was ratified the next moment, for the two old men shook hands very solemnly for quite a minute.

"I'd give something, though, to find out about that money," said the vicar, "for it's going again."

"I can assure you, sir," said the churchwarden, "that I've slept night after night with those poor-boxes in bed with me, and yet I can't see through

the thing anyhow. By the way—I have read of such things—you don't happen to be a somnambulist, do you? You haven't been of a night and emptied the boxes in your dreams, scraping together a store, and hid it away for your heirs, administrators, executors, and assigns, to find out?"

And as he spoke he glanced round the room, as if seeking a likely spot for such a purpose.

"No, Timson, no," replied the vicar, smiling sadly. "You were present when my will was signed, and if there's anything more than is set down on that piece of parchment I freely give it to you, old friend."

"Verbal gifts don't go down with executors, sir," said Timson, with his eyes twinkling; "and besides, I don't think it would be the thing for me to stick to a hoard that you had filched from your own poor-box."

"There, there, there!" ejaculated the vicar, "you are talking nonsense, Timson."

"Mr. Gray, sir," said the churchwarden, seriously and with some feeling, "a glass of sherry with you, sir; and though toasts have nearly gone out, I shall drink to your long life. Yes," continued the churchwarden, after a busy little pause, "it is a good glass of sherry; it is one of my weak points to have a decent glass in the house, and I don't know anything that I like better."

"Except a glass of hot toddy," said the vicar, smiling.

"Well, well, well, sir," said Timson, "suppose we put that aside, or we shall be getting into cribbage and pipes, and all sorts of other weak points."

"True," said the vicar; "but, really, Timson, I'm not ashamed of those little weaknesses, even if I am a clergyman. I'm a very humble old fellow, with few friends and fewer relatives. I don't belong to society, Timson; but keep to my quiet, old-fashioned country ways, which I brought up with me out of Lincolnshire. I'm not a fashionable parson, Timson; but I try to do my best for those amongst whom I have to teach."

"You do, sir—you do," said the churchwarden, warmly; "and you make me disgusted with myself for being put out with your anxiety about this poor-box. Now, let's set to and go over it quietly and methodically; what's to be done?"

"I don't know—I don't know," said the vicar, despondingly, "but we shall find him out, to a certainty, some day."

"Him?" exclaimed the churchwarden. "Him, sir?"

"Well, yes; him, or her, or it. I would not care if I could get just an inkling as to who it could be. But I'm determined upon one thing, Timson; and that is, if there is much more of it I will do away with the poor-boxes altogether, and preach an extra charity sermon every quarter."

And the vicar tucked his umbrella beneath his arm, as if ready to go.

"But I say, sir," exclaimed Mr. Timson, "I would not bear it in mind quite so much."

"What do you mean, Timson?" said the vicar.

"Texts, sir, texts," said Mr. Timson, drily.

"Well, Timson, I won't—I won't, really. Though between ourselves, as friends, as old friends, you

know—I don't mind telling you that I had been making up the heads of a discourse for next Sunday upon the parable of the lost piece of money. But there, I'll take your advice, and try something else."

"Do," said his friend, "and let the matter rest. Don't show that you notice it, sir; be quite quiet, and we shall put them off their guard. I've my suspicions yet."

"No, you have not, Timson," said the vicar, laughing, "not you. You are not a suspicious man, and never were."

"Nor you neither," said the tea-dealer, shaking hands. "Good morning."

And as his old friend went through the busy portion of the house, raising his hat in reply to the salute of clerks and warehousemen, the churchwarden muttered to himself, "A thorough gentleman."

An opinion from which some people differed.

CHAPTER XXIX.—THE ST. RUNWALD'S MYSTERY.

GENTLEMANLY or ungentlemanly, to blame in making a friend of the churchwarden—a tea-dealer—or not, the vicar was thoroughly conscientious; and this constant plundering of a little store intended for the poor of his parish was a sore and festering thorn in his side. It may be questioned, though, whether the poor really were sufferers by the thefts. More probably they were gainers; for, ignorant of the amounts pilfered, and feeling that to a certain extent the little fund was in his charge, the vicar would often drop a sovereign or two into the little heap to make up the deficiency when the boxes were emptied—to make up for, perhaps, the loss of only a few shillings.

But it was in vain that the vicar fidgeted and fretted, rubbing his hair into all sorts of shapes, and especially that of a silver flame issuing from the top of his head. The pilfering went on—now ceasing for a while, now recommencing; and the simple plan of emptying the boxes after each service was never thought of.

Mr. Purkis grew warm and perspired as he sandpapered the steel bindings, making the boxes glisten to an extent that would never have been had there not existed the little jealousy between Mrs. Ruggles and himself.

Not that Mr. Purkis loved work, for his was the kind of constitution that would bear a large amount of ease, and he always felt himself to flourish most when clothed in his robes of office, and basking in beauty's eye as he ornamented the porch of the church, and awed the boys from Gunniss's, his duties seeming to consist of an occasional wag of the head to the pew-opener when some stranger required a sitting, and a majestic roll as far as the iron gates and back.

He wagged his head very mysteriously at his wife when she was brushing him down of a Sunday morning, and removing every speck of dust from his blue robe, to which she used a hard brush, while the broad scarlet velvet cape, with its deep gold lace trimming, was daintily dusted over with a brush that was soft. Then Mrs. Purkis would hand her lord his cocked hat and white Berlin gloves, gazing up in his face and looking him over with the greatest

of veneration. For some ladies are fond of seeing their lords and masters in uniform, and Mrs. Purkis was one of them; and she would afterwards stand at the door to see her man go down the street, exclaiming, too, angrily to herself, "Drat them boys," when some evil-disposed, irreverent young scamp would shout after the portly officer, "Beadle, beadle threadle my needle;" though she consoled herself with the recollection that "Boys allus was full of their sarse," ready to laugh at any of our noble British institutions, especially if relating to law and order, beginning with the majestic helmet-crowned policeman, and ending with the Lord Chief Baron in his swaddling clothes.

But if Mr. Purkis looked sagacious, it seemed probable that, like other people, he only had his suspicions—such, too, as he could not confirm, though a slight frown and a shake of the head, particularly if accompanied by nipped-together lips, imply a wonderful deal; and your heavy-cheeked, solid-headed judge will carry a weight with the public that his keen-witted and sharp-featured subordinate will lack.

Mr. Purkis obtained the credit of knowing a great deal, but he kept the knowledge to himself; and Time, the inexorable, slipped on, Jared discoursing with his organ, and the great congregation at St. Runwald's listening patiently to the vicar's quiet, practical little sermons; but though Mr. Gray kept his promise to the churchwarden, and there were no more texts touching upon money, yet Mr. Timson scratched his head viciously one day, as he sat in his pew and heard the vicar dwell upon the rich men dropping their gifts into the treasury, and the poor widow's mite, and adroitly introduced his opinion that it was as great a sin to steal the widow's mite as the grand gifts of the rich.

"But I would not really, you know," said Timson, the next time they met; "as I've told you before, it's only putting the thieves on their guard, and can do no good."

"Might work on their consciences, Timson, eh? Startle them into better ways and feelings." But the churchwarden shook his head. "Think not, eh?" said the vicar. "Conscience makes cowards of us all, as Milton said."

"Shakespeare, Shakespeare, sir," said Timson.

"My memory's failing fast, Timson," said the old man, sadly; "but I thought it was Milton. You don't read the poets."

"Never, by any chance," said Timson; "but I know I heard those words at old Drury, and I know they don't put Milton on the stage."

"I believe you're right—I believe you're right, Timson," said the vicar. "And so you really would not say any more about it publicly?"

"Not a word," said Timson, firmly.

"But it was neatly introduced, eh?"

"Yes—ye-e-e-s," said Timson; "but it does no good, depend upon it, sir. The man who takes money from the church won't be frightened because you tell him it's wicked."

"Think not?" said the vicar.

"Sure of it," said Timson.

Timson was right, for the money still went, week after week: shillings and half-crowns, and sixpences and florins. Purkis groaned and grunted as he

polished off the dust that would collect on the steel-work, as much at the labour as at the losses; but he did not see the money take to itself wings and fly away. Jared and Ichabod came and went, and the harmonies flooded the old church; but they saw nothing. Vicar and churchwarden gazed about, as they came and went, and shook their heads at the boxes, but they went as wise as they came. Neither did Mrs. Ruggles grow enlightened when she came on Saturdays to set open all the doors, and swept, and dusted, and punched pulpit pillows, and walloped (Ichabod's own term) cushions from pews, and banged hassocks in the porch, finishing her duties by perversely shifting people's prayer books and church services from pew to pew, starting them upon voyages round the church—trips which sometimes consumed months, and more than once she obtained rewards, when, by request, she hunted out and returned the missing books.

But though the officials saw not the thief, some of those fat-cheeked, half-dressed, trumpet-blowing angels must have beheld, and, herald-like, might have proclaimed the offender with the sound of the trump. The marble effigy of the statesman who stood with scroll in outstretched hand, as if in debate—he must have seen; while Edward Lawrence, citizen of London, and Dame Alys, his wife, intent though they were in prayer upon their marble cushions, might have stolen one stony glance upon the sacrilege committed. Why, there were effigies posed and planted everywhere about the old edifice, which the good knight and architect, Sir Christopher Wren, had restored, when it was crumbling and dilapidated inside—restored, and most fully, according to the sublime taste of his period. But none of these effigies told tales, not even David, who stood within three feet of one box, and busily harped away; so busily indeed that he had lost his garments, probably in the heat of the work, for there was no Michal at hand to take him to task. Time did not tell either—at least, not at this period of the story—though he too commanded a good view of the church, as he stood upon a bracket on one side of the chancel arch, mowing away with a broken scythe, like a ragged Irishman in the hay-making season, while his hour glass was slung at his side after the fashion of Pat's wooden bottle. Grim Death, in skeleton form, who stood as counterbalance to Time on the other side of the arch, pickaxe in one hand, dart in the other, also said nothing—perhaps, because offended; for though most people maintained that he held a pickaxe for grave-digging purposes, there were others who maintained that it was a cross-bow. As for the stained glass cherubim and seraphim, playing guitar, bass viol, cornet, harp, sackbut, psalter, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, they seemed too busy with their heavenly harmonies to notice such mundane matters as pounds, shillings, and pence. Judas, the bag-bearer, was not visible, or, "Set a thief to catch a thief," he might have told tales; but painted upon the ceiling were Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—well painted too, though the artist's evangelical emblems of bull, eagle, and lamb were not quite up to nature.

But none of these pointed out the offender; and the old vicar walked disconsolately up and down his

church, pausing here and there, as if lost amidst the different surmises which flooded his brain; but there was no information to be gained. The mystery was not concealed amongst the carved oak window draperies and cottage-pattern woodwork, which hid the stone tracery of the old east window; it was not behind the spindle balustrade communion rails, nor the iron-barred workhouse window-like rood screen, nor in the brass-nailed, red-curtained, soft-cushioned, high-sided pews, where City folk loved to snooze on Sundays.

The mystery was there, but invisible; and though the vicar looked appealingly at the cross-legged Templar upon his back, and at the brasses rescued from trampling feet to be fixed in the wall, neither father, mother, nor—right or left—one of the step-like regular sons and daughters, brazen-faced as they were, whispered him a word more than did the black, fork-tongued, barb-tailed, huge-clawed, ancient-stained glass devil, so busy watching the Virgin and Child in the clerestory window.

So the Reverend John Gray sighed, and softly rubbed his hands, and the poor-box still was robbed.

CHAPTER XXX.—BROUGHT HOME.

WHISH-ISH, whoosh-oosh, over and over again Ichabod had pumped the wind-chest full, till the handle came down heavily, and the boy had balanced himself upon it, with the hard wood deeply impressing his stomach, and enjoyed the luxury of a ride down. Then he had seen the little leaden tell-tale weight run up again as the wind slowly filtered out. But, though he repeated the process some half dozen times, no stops were drawn out, no loud chords came pealing from the organ; and at last, tired of pumping wind for nothing, Ichabod Gunniss spun the little weight about, and pulled at it until he broke the string, and saw the end disappear inside the organ case, when he pulled out his pocket-knife, whetted it awhile upon the sole of his ill-shaped shoe, and then, for about the twentieth time, he began to carve that eternal "I. G." upon the back of the organ case. But in spite of the whetting the knife was blunt, and though by going with the grain of the wood Ichabod had no difficulty in making a capital I, yet as soon as he came to the grand curves of the capital G, he found out the difficulty of his task, and after a few slips and slides he gave the thing up in despair.

Jared was in the curtain-hung pew; but he had not been heard to move for quite half an hour. Perhaps he was composing a new voluntary—perhaps asleep; but all was perfectly still; so Ichabod looked about for something with which to amuse himself. Now, it will be readily allowed that the interior of a church is not the place where you would expect to find many objects specially adapted for passing time in any other than a religious way, particularly if that church be empty as regarded its congregation. So for a while the boy looked round in vain. There were no flies to catch, for the weather was cold; there was not room to spin his top; it required smooth stones and moisture to work his sucker; pitching his worsted cap up in the air and catching it upon his head was all very well, but it was tiring, and though amusing and

tolerably satisfactory, yet without an appreciative audience it was not lasting as a pastime. He could not indulge in the luxury of tying himself in knots by passing his legs over his head; not that he was afraid of Jared coming, but on account of his being a fast-growing boy, and given to filling his garments very tightly soon after they had been served out to him. In fact, at the present time there was a good deal of wrist beyond the cuffs of his coat, and an interval between his vest and leather lower garments, which had of late fitted him so tightly that, unknown to the world at large, Ichabod had treated them as an extra cuticle, and slept in them, sooner than toil for a quarter of an hour to get them off; while now, to have attempted anything after the fashion of an elastic brother would have had the effect of making him shed his coat like a caterpillar, always supposing that Ichabod's muscles were stronger than the charitable integument. Besides, if he got himself into such difficulties he might be cuffed—not that Jared ever had cuffed him, but from Ichabod's experience of human nature he knew it to be given to cuffing, and it seemed quite possible that such a proceeding might intrude itself upon his gymnastic exercise, even from so quiet and long-suffering a personage as Jared Pellet.

There seemed to be nothing of any kind to amuse the boy, though he looked with great interest at the largest pedal pipe, and wished that he could get inside and treat it as if it were a chimney. But it was out of his reach, so that he scratched his head in despair.

"Wot's the good o' bringing a cove here if he aint a-going to play?" he muttered, rubbing his snub nose viciously, and then once more seizing the bellows handle, and pumping at it until the wind-chest must have suffered from plethora and been nigh unto bursting, while the compressed air forced its way out again with an angry hiss. "He's asleep, that's wot he is," muttered Ichabod.

The boy then had another look round for something fresh; but there was nothing more amusing to be seen than an old dog's-eared S. P. C. K. prayer book, in half a liver-coloured cover, bearing the following legend:—

judgment dai
wil say
were is the book you stole awa
from Jane Muggins
hir book January 9, 1838—

the rest being torn away, while the above was soon after peeled off by the busy Ichabod and scattered about the floor. He then, before returning the book to its place, ornamented the title-page with a fancy portrait of Mr. Purkis, the beadle—that gentleman being indicated by a powerful cocked hat, which gave the sketch the appearance of a shoemaker's half-moon knife, or a straight-handled cheese-cutter. Then Ichabod yawned loudly and wonderfully, displaying an elasticity of facial muscle that was surprising; while it was evident that his mental faculties were busy at work devising some new *délassement*. The piece of string with a button at one end which he had in his pocket, and which was generally needed for spinning and setting up one of the immortal Seven-dial tops which were in

Ichabod's day known to be bigger and better than any other tops in London, could only now be plaited crochet-chain fashion, after flicking it like a whip to make it snap; and however much of a pastime to a young lady, it proved but tame to Ichabod, who only plaited it once, pulled it out again with a snatch, chewed the end, and wound up his top, when he struck a Greek statue sort of attitude as he made believe to spin it, but not without bringing his knuckles sharply into contact with the organ case, and finding their skin more easily removable than the leathern garments into whose pockets he now placed the top and string, while with both hands plunged deeply, he routed in their depths for something fresh.

He brought forth his string of buttons, and polished his leaden nicker—a flat disc, that had evidently been moulded in the top of a brass weight. He counted the buttons, rubbing favourite specimens upon the sleeve of his coat, and admiring the crests upon the "liveries," and the shanked and pearl buttons.

Then he stripped the buttons nearly all off the string, to give place to a metal ornament with its great G, which, after a few moments' hesitation, he cut off his own coat, afterwards looking guiltily round to see that he was not observed. Then commenced the restoration or rethreading of the buttons, when the one bearing the great G looked so well in its pewter beauty, that Ichabod could not resist the temptation, but, knife-armed, he carefully felt behind him, and cut the two ornaments from their abiding place at his waist, where they had long reposed upon the back of his coat, just above the little tails; and then his itching fingers began to clutch at those in front, when he would have cut off more but for a wholesome dread of castigation. But these three large pewters were a great acquisition to his string, and when according to size, the buttons once more occupied their places, and had been admired and polished, and breathed upon, Ichabod sighed for something new, and replaced the collection in his pocket.

Then the boy had another good pump at the bellows handle, riding down upon it more than once; but, though in a dense part of London, there was still no demand for fresh air, so he had to devise something else to satisfy the cravings of his restless spirit.

Those leather inexpressibles of his were almost inexhaustible in treasures; for now the boy's face lighted up as he found something fresh to suit—a dirty, sticky ball of india-rubber, which, after a little masticating, became available for the purpose of pulling out, and then, after the enclosure of a small portion of air, became the base of several little bladders, which would, when compressed between the thumb nails, explode with a sharp crack.

But even that would not last for ever, and Ichabod next brought forth a squirt; but that, unfortunately, was useless without water, and had to be replaced, after a polish upon the coat sleeve, when he again declared it to be a shame to bring him there when he "worn't wanted;" and, feeling more than ever certain that the organist was asleep, he began to creep on tip-toe towards where he could see through

the curtains, and inspect the interior of the organ-pew.

"I knowed he was," muttered Ichabod, relieving his feelings by making a grimace at his employer, one evidently copied from a carved corbel outside the church; for, drawing down his lower eyelids with his forefingers, he hooked the little digits in the corners of his rather too capacious mouth, and stretched eyes and lips to their greatest extent.

The face produced was striking, especially as seen in the dim light of the old church; but Jared Pellet saw it not, while the boy altered his opinion upon hearing something which sounded like a sob. For, with face buried in his hands, the organist was bending down over the keys, motionless, and evidently suffering from some bitter mental pang.

Ichabod, upon hearing the sob, darted back to his place in an instant, to seize the handle and pump more wind into the once-again empty chest; but hearing nothing more, he decided in his own mind that the noise he had heard was but a snore, and he stole forward to relieve his feelings with another grimace. But this time he tortured not his physiognomy, for, making some slight noise as he peered through the curtains, he encountered the full gaze of the organist, who was looking up; and, by some strange fascination, man and boy remained as it were fixed by each other's eyes for quite a minute.

"Plee, sir, didn't you call?" said Ichabod, who was the first to break the silence.

"Call—call?" echoed Jared. "No, I did not call."

"Shall I blow, plee, sir?" said the boy.

"A blow," muttered Jared, dreamily, "yes, a heavy blow—a blast from one of the storms of life."

And he once more buried his face in his hands; while Ichabod relieved his feelings by sticking his tongue into his cheek, and lifting up and putting down one leg, before he again spoke, to ask if there was anything the matter.

"Go home, boy, go home," said Jared, slowly, and speaking as if he were half stunned.

"Sha'n't you want to practise, sir?" queried the boy.

Jared made a negative movement of his head, and, waiting for no further dismissal, the boy caught up his cap, scuttled down the stairs, clattered out of the door, and was gone whooping and hallooing with delight at his freedom; while the organist, slowly lifting his head and looking about, as if in a weary, stupefying dream, took up a letter from the keyboard, where it had lain, and where he found it that day when he came to practise—a letter written in the vicar's bold hand, sealed with the great topaz seal that hung to his broad, old-fashioned watch ribbon, and directed to him; while it enclosed a little, bright, peculiarly shaped key, which Jared remembered to have seen lying in his music-locker for weeks past when he had come up into the loft, though after the first time when he had picked it up and turned it over it hardly took his attention. But now, slowly and half-tottering, he rose and left the organ-pew, with the letter in one hand—an old-fashioned letter, written upon blue quarto paper, folded so as to dispense with an envelope—the key in the other, descended the stairs, crossed nave and aisle to one poor-box, when he tried the key, to find that it opened the lock with ease; then sighing,

as he closed it, without noticing that the vicar had removed the contents that morning when he left the letter for the organist upon the keyboard of the instrument, Jared crossed the silent church to the other door, to try the box there, with the same result; when, once more ascending to the gallery, he stood again in the organ-pew, looking towards the chancel, and then read his letter for about the sixth time.

Once only he looked up. It was afternoon, and the sun streamed in at the great west window, illuminating the chancel, when there, as if lit up especially for him to read, the golden letters of that particular sentence brighter than the others—bright and flashing, but stained by the sunbeams that pierced a painted pane of a fiery hue, there were the words:—

“Thou shalt not steal.”

Jared Pellet groaned as his eyes fell and rested upon the paper he held, and he began once more to read, muttering now and then a word or two or a sentence half aloud.

“No prosecution—came with a friend—wished to try the organ—found the false key amongst the music—knew wards—flashed upon him that it opened the poor-boxes—own conscience be my punishment—engagement—terminate—at Christmas—best of all parties—and may God forgive me.”

“And may God forgive me,” groaned Jared, aloud, after a long pause. “Forgive me for what?”

And then he stood turning over and over the key he held in his hand, scanning it again and again, as if it were indeed the key to the mystery of the robbery. He wiped his forehead, and looked about him, trying to think, and wondering from whence came the key. He tried to determine in his own mind the day upon which he had first seen it, but without success; though even had he been sure of the date, the knowledge, he was obliged to own, would have been valueless. It seemed but too certain that an enemy had placed the key where it had been found, though he battled long and fiercely against the thought, as he said, plaintively, “I have no enemies.” And, indeed, if his assertion were not absolutely true, he certainly had none of his own wilful making.

Then he sighed again bitterly, folded the key in the letter as he had first found it, took it out and read the letter again, though he now knew every word by heart, and could repeat it with his lips, but it was as it were by rote, and the meaning seemed hard to understand. It had come upon him with such a shock, he was so utterly unprepared, that when, at last, more than once, the truth had forced its way home, he would rouse himself from the prostration it caused, and tried to find comfort in the letter, which afforded it not. Again he folded the key in the letter in a dreary, absent way, replaced his books in the locker, and was about to drop the cushioned lid, when he recalled where he had last seen that key, and raised a few sheets of music to make sure that it was not still there, in the farther corner where it had slipped; but no, there was only a tuning-fork and a little fluey dust, mingled with scraps of paper. Then he dropped the lid, and sat down for a few moments with his hands to his forehead; but he raised himself again, opened the organ, then lifted the lid of the locker, took out a piece, and placed it upon

the stand ready for practice; but remembering directly after that the boy was gone, he once more closed the instrument and looked helplessly about, when, as if seized by some sudden impulse, he caught up his hat and hurried out of the church, forgetting to lock the door; but hastening back to do so when he had gone about a hundred yards.

CHAPTER XXXI.—PROVE IT!

QUARTER of an hour after leaving the church, Jared was at the door of the vicar's residence, when his summons was answered by the old Lincolnshire woman who had come up to London with “maister,” and filled the posts of cook and housekeeper.

Now, most people would have told their servants to say “Not at home” to such and such a person; but the vicar had his own ideas upon such matters, and the old woman was ready for the expected visitor, for she exclaimed—

“Maister said he wouldn't see you if you called, Mr. Pellet, and if you wanted to say anything you was to write.”

“But did he say—” ventured Jared.

“No, he didn't say not another word,” said the old housekeeper.

And Jared turned disconsolately away, walking down the street in a purposeless manner, until, moved by another idea, he roused himself, and hurried in the direction of Mr. Timson's stores, where he found the head of the establishment, very stern and important, in his counting-house, but apparently willing to listen to reason.

“It's all a mistake, sir. I'm as innocent as a child,” exclaimed Jared.

“Haden't you better shut the door first, sir?” said Timson, drily; when Jared hurriedly closed the glass door of communication with the warehouse. “That's better,” said he. “As well not to let all the world know.”

“It's all a mistake though, Mr. Timson,” again exclaimed Jared.

“Just so, just so, Mr. Pellet, sir; but prove it.”

And Timson thrust his fingers into his waistcoat, and then drew himself back as far as he could.

“That key has been in my locker for weeks and weeks now, sir,” said Jared. “I saw it lying there, and thought it might have been left by somebody. It never occurred to me that it would open the poor-boxes.”

Mr. Timson raised his eyebrows, and looked deeply into the account book before him; then he placed three fingers upon the three columns—pounds, shillings, and pence—and slowly and methodically thrust them up the paper, as if calculating the amount of all three at one and the same time. He muttered, too, several indistinct words, which sounded like the names of various sums of money, before he turned again to Jared.

“I always told the vicar it was false keys, Mr. Pellet; but if we've put the saddle upon the wrong horse, or the boot upon the wrong foot, why the wearer must kick it off, sir.”

“But you don't think that I did it, sir?” exclaimed Jared, pitifully.

“Well, I don't know, Mr. Pellet—I don't know,”

said the churchwarden. "I don't know, indeed, sir. I don't want to think it's you; but what are we to do? Mr. Gray comes to me, lays his hand on my shoulder, and he says—only last night, mind, sir"—Mr. Timson had his apron on, and therefore he said "sir"—"Timson, I've found out the culprit."

"Then I hope you're satisfied, sir," I said.

"No," he said, "no, not at all. I've found him out; but now I wish to goodness that I had not, for it seems a cruel thing."

"Who is it, sir?" I said.

"Oh," he said, "I can hardly believe it myself; but he's poor, very poor, and has been led into temptation."

"But who is it?" I said again.

"Oh!" he said, "it's poor Pellet. I found a false key at the bottom of his book locker, when I took the organist of St. Chrysostom's to try our instrument."

"Pooh!" I said; "nonsense, sir, stuff!"

"What!" he says; "why, you suspected him yourself, and said you were sure he was the culprit, only the other day!"

"Oh, Mr. Timson!" groaned Jared.

"Now, don't you be in a hurry," grumbled the churchwarden, pettishly. "Hear me out, can't you? You young fellows always will be so rash."

Jared raised his hands deprecatingly, and the churchwarden continued—

"Very true, sir," I said; "so did everybody in turn; but depend upon it, 'tain't Pellet." Those were the very words that passed, Mr. Pellet; and now you've got to prove yourself innocent, that is, if you can, sir; for though I stuck up for you to the vicar. I must say that it looks very black against you. We wanted to find the key to the mystery, and we found it, sir, in your box; so you have got to prove yourself an honest man, and show how the key got there."

"But I can't, Mr. Timson," said Jared. "I've not the slightest notion."

"Then it looks blacker against you, Mr. Pellet; that's all I can say; blacker than ever—Kyshow at the very least, without so much as a dust of green to relieve it."

Jared groaned.

"Why, sir, not saying it was you," continued Mr. Timson, excitedly, "a man must be a terrible scoundrel to go and rob the poor, even if he was poor himself, when he was situated as you are, and knew that the vicar, or somebody else not far from you at the present time, might—I don't say would, sir—might have helped him out of a difficulty if he had been in a corner."

Standing hat in hand, Jared looked at the churchwarden, while for a moment the little glass-enclosed office seemed to swim round him—but only for a moment; then came a choking sensation in his throat, and a blank, dreary hopelessness settled down upon him. He tried to speak, but the words would not come. He endeavoured to make up some defence, to think out some plan of action; but blank, blank, blank—all seemed blank and hopeless, and it almost appeared to him now that he really was the thief they took him for.

"Prove it, sir—prove it," resumed Timson, placing

his thumb upon the edge of his desk, and pressing it down, as if he had Jared beneath it, and was keeping him down until he proved his innocence. "I'm sorry, sir—very sorry, sir; and so's the vicar. Don't you go and think, Mr. Pellet," he continued, in quite an indignant tone—"don't you go and think that we wanted the poor-boxes robbed; we didn't, you know; and we didn't want to find out that it was you."

Jared waved his hand deprecatingly.

"Well, sir—well, sir," exclaimed Timson; "prove it, sir, prove it. As I said before, prove it."

And he pressed the thumb down harder and harder.

"But, man, how can I?" exclaimed Jared, desperately.

"Shoo—shoo—shoo—shoo—shoo—shoo!" ejaculated Timson. "Don't raise your voice like that, sir, or I shall be indignant too. It won't do, Mr. Jared Pellet. You're in the wrong, sir—you're in the wrong."

"I know, I know, Mr. Timson," said Jared, imploringly; "but what can I do?"

"Prove it, sir—prove it," said Timson, again. "I want to see you innocent; and if we are wrong, there's my hand—leastwise, there it is when you've proved it."

And for fear that Jared should seize upon it, he tucked it under the tail of his coat, turned his back to the fire, and then stood looking fiercely at the dejected man before him.

But Jared had no thought of seizing the churchwarden's hand; for as he stood there, bent and wrinkled of brow, he was going over, for the fiftieth time, the contents of the vicar's letter, and then thinking of those at home, and the poverty that this loss of his situation must bring upon them.

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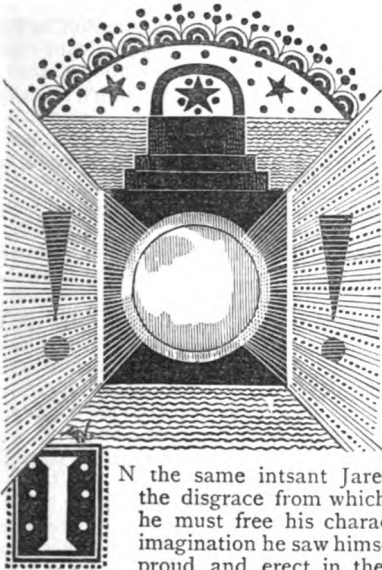
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CHAPTER XXXII.—FLICKERED—GONE.



IN the same insatiable Jared thought of the disgrace from which he felt that he must free his character; and in imagination he saw himself once more proud and erect in the presence of his accusers, but refusing with scorn the prayer of the vicar that he should continue to be organist. No, that would never be. He would fulfil the duties to the last; and then, once more clear in character, he would seek for some fresh means of subsistence for the family in Duplex-street.

No organ here—no reflector in Timson's counting-house; but Jared was still dreaming of being cleared from the accusation, when he awoke with a stare, as the churchwarden exclaimed again—

"Prove it, sir—prove it."

Ay, prove it. But how? And desolate, despairing, and half broken-hearted, Jared Pellet left the office, seeing nothing external, but mechanically making his way into the streets, where he wandered about, hour after hour, aimless and dejected; his mind a very chaos of conflicting thoughts, save in one instance, where brightly and strong shone one ray from his clouded imagination, and that one was before him always. Other plans were made, broken, and confused; but this still stood out clearly before him. Come what may, they must not know of this at home; for he felt that the secret lay almost in his own breast, since a few words to Purkis and Ruggles would ensure their silence.

Returned home Jared found the little tailor sad and dejected by his fireside.

"But you'll sit down, Mr. Ruggles," said Mrs. Jared Pellet, kindly, as the little man stood with one arm resting upon the chimney-piece, heedless of the chair Patty had set for him.

"No, ma'am—no ma'am, not to-night," said Tim, drearily. "I must go, ma'am—I must go. Thought I'd just drop in for a minute to see how you all were. Little ones all quite well, I hope, ma'am—all strong?"

"Thank God, yes," said Mrs. Jared, softly.

And the tears stood in her eyes as she spoke, and stood watching poor Tim, as he stood brushing where the nap should have been upon his shabby hat, and then fidgeting and re-arranging the piece of glossy new black cloth, which shone so conspicuously against the rusty headpiece. For Tim Ruggles was in deep mourning, consisting of his Sunday clothes, wrinkled as his own worn face, the above-named band, and a pair of brand-new black cloth gloves.

This was Friday, and for the whole week Tim had not done a stroke of work, but dressed himself in his best morning after morning, and gone out, Mrs. Ruggles never knew where; but Mrs. Jared guessed, and though the poor little fellow had carefully rubbed them, there were still earthy stains upon the knees of his trousers that no amount of rubbing would remove—stains that were renewed afresh each day, while every night that week Tim had called in at Duplex-street, for Tim had "thought he would just drop in to see how they all were," and had then stood gazing from child face to child face, with a lingering, eager look that was pitiful to see.

And no one questioned Tim, for he had come in upon the Sunday night holding his black-banded hat before his breast, as if to shield his poor wounded heart, that was too sorely hurt for him to lay it bare before his friends. There was no thought there of Tim's shabby mourning, where threadbare clothes were familiar; and pitiful as was poor Tim's appearance, there was something in his hopeless looks that made their way to Mrs. Jared's heart, so that in spite of his expostulating, "No, ma'am, no," she would gently take him by the hand and press him back into his seat, where, with his hand shading his eyes, he would sit awhile in silence.

For there was no need of words; they all knew that at last a keener breath had put out the flickering little flame Tim had so long and carefully tended; and, respecting the blow that had fallen upon him during the past week, child after child was schooled not to ask after or press upon Tim some rough plaything for little Pine, while Mrs. Jared knew that sooner or later their humble friend would ease his burdened heart by making them the confidants of his trouble.

It was, indeed, genuine sorrow that bowed down Tim Ruggles' head; and, save to sleep, for days past he had hardly rested in the home that now seemed so desolate. It was naught to him that his wife spoke to him almost gently. His spirit revolted against the woman, and the first morning he tore the whalebone rib angrily from the wall, thrust and stamped it into the fire, and then hurried from her presence, to return at night worn and subdued; but only to hasten off the next morning where, though Mrs. Jared rightly guessed, no one but the gate-keeper of Kensal Green Cemetery could rightly have told.

Saturday, and then in the evening Patty hurried to answer the same faltering knock at the door, and once again Tim Ruggles just dropped in to see how they all were; while his poor, seamed face looked more haggard than ever.

"Poor little man. What did he do that he should

have such a wife?" exclaimed Mrs. Jared to her husband that night.

Not that Tim was untidy, for he was as carefully dressed as his garments would allow. Clean shaved, too, was Tim; but there was a desolate look in his face that sorely troubled Mrs. Jared, who more than once whispered to Jared that she hoped the poor man would not do anything dreadful.

But Jared was right when he said there was no fear, for Tim's was a genuine, unselfish sorrow, that in all earnestness he had bent his back to carry, bearing himself humbly now that the first wild paroxysms of his grief were past.

The children had all gone to bed, and Tim, as they left the room, had kissed most tenderly and blessed each one as it came to say good night, and now he stood at last in his old attitude by the chimney-piece, for he could not rest in his chair.

"It's coming to-night," whispered Mrs. Jared to Patty, and she, poor girl, had run out of the room to sob for a few minutes, and then returned, red-eyed and flushed, to sit down to her work.

"I hope I haven't troubled you very much," said Tim, gently. "I've been in a many times, but I've not been myself, you know, and couldn't trust what was here, to speak. It wasn't me, Mrs. Pellet, ma'am," he continued, turning himself from Jared, so that it should only be a tender-hearted mother who saw the quivering lip and tear-wet face, "it wasn't me, but a poor broken-down wretch who could not be man enough to fight against his troubles. You always said I ought to have been a woman, ma'am, and you are right, quite right. But I'm better now, ma'am, and I shall be at work next week; poor people can't afford to be sorrowful, ma'am. Your rich folk can be in mourning every day, outside and inside, ma'am; we poor people can only do that once a week. I couldn't sit on the board this week for thinking, ma'am. Come sorrow, one must fight it out; come hard times, the same, but one's as much as a man like me can bear."

Mrs. Jared sighed, and went busily on with some little domestic task performed with needle and thread.

"Haden't you better sit down, Mr. Ruggles?" she said.

"No, ma'am," said Tim, hurriedly, "time I was gone."

Then the room was once more very still, so that Jared almost started as Tim spoke again very slowly.

"Week to-morrow since we buried her, ma'am, and not a soul to say good-bye to her but me. No father, no mother. Oh! it was cruel—cruel, and how those whom God has given children can leave them in strange hands to pine away and die is more than I can understand. I wouldn't own she was so ill, ma'am, not to a soul. I told myself it wasn't so, and all the time I knew it was. 'Grim death won't come and take that sweet, gentle, loving-hearted child away, Tim,' I said, 'when there's your rough, restless old carcass close at hand!' But that's what he does, ma'am; he's idle, though he's busy, is death; and to save blunting that scythe of his he goes on mowing down the sweet, gentle, bright-coloured tender flowers, and leaves the dry old stalks, like me, to be snapped off by the wind."

"But I knew it was coming, ma'am, faster and faster, and yet I couldn't help thinking that there might be a change for the better. To have seen her you might have hoped she was getting well, for she seemed to be easier towards the last, and for two or three days the pain was as good as gone, 'cept when her cough troubled her, and nothing stopped that a bit. Never complained, neither, she didn't, but kept up dressed and about to the very last."

"I couldn't help knowing that she was bad, but I did not think it was quite so bad. It's a sort of thing that you can't seem to believe, ma'am. It won't come home to you until it's too late; and then—then—"

Tim Ruggles' voice grew thicker and more husky during the last sentence, and as he broke off his hand covered his eyes once more.

"I'm very weak, ma'am," he said at last, apologetically; "I'm not like most men, I know, to take on so about that poor child; but you see my poor first wife loved her, and she seemed to be quite left to me to take care of, and now that she's gone it don't seem that I did my duty by her."

Here Mrs. Jared and Patty murmured strongly in dissent.

"I can't quite think that I did," said Tim; "but I did try—I did try; and if I'd interfered more when Mrs. Ruggles—wonderful woman, you know, ma'am—when Mrs. Ruggles corrected, I'm sadly afraid it would have been worse when I was away. I went twice—three times, four times to Bedford-row, and told them how bad the child was getting, and they said they'd communicate, and that was all there. Then I wasn't satisfied with the doctor, because he shook his head and looked serious; and when I got another doctor, who smiled and chatted and said pleasant things, I felt angry with myself because I had not gone to him sooner."

"What's the use of earning money and trying to save up a few pounds if there isn't going to be health and strength, ma'am? But it was of no use to anybody but the doctor, ma'am, his coming; and poor little Pine got to be weaker and weaker; and though she liked to go, and I would have carried her all the way till we could have sat down on a seat in the park, where she could have leant her head against me, and watched the people go by, the doctor said 'No! she must not go out.' So I made her a little sofa on my board, where she could lie, and see me work, and thread fresh needles for me, and hold my wax and scissors, and hand me buttons. Then, too, she used to like having a few flowers; but she would sooner go without than for me to leave her while I went to fetch them. She did not seem to mind at all; but she must have known what was coming, and could not bear me out of her sight for a minute, while now it was, ma'am, that she showed what she felt towards some one else, shivering and shutting her eyes whenever she came anigh."

CHAPTER XXXIII.—POOR TIM'S CHARGE.

"I DON'T believe in people's hearts breaking, ma'am," said Tim, picking at the band of his hat, "but I could have held down my head and cried like a child any time while she was so ill, and there so still and uncomplaining."

"Night after night I lay down on that board so as to sleep by her, for it seemed to please the poor little thing. 'Let me hold your hand,' she'd say, and when I gave it to her she'd hold it tightly and lay it on her pillow, and then put her hot little cheek upon it till I took it away to get her cough medicine, and then held her up in my arms to take it. I don't make a fuss, ma'am, about what I did—it only came natural, and I couldn't have slept and known that her little lips were hot and dry for want of drink; while, when I held her up like that, she'd nestle close to me, and creep the thin little arms inside my weskit, and ask in her pretty gentle way whether she might stay so, because she could sleep there.

"And there she would sleep, only starting up now and then to look in my face as if to see whether she was safe, and then she'd lay her head down again and whisper to me that something kept pulling her away, and try to tell me about what she had been dreaming, but her poor little fevered head was all wrong, and her words broken and confused.

"'Somebody's calling—somebody's calling,' she kept on whispering to me the last day. 'There!' she'd say, with a start, 'didn't you hear some one call Pine—Pine!' And then she would cry eagerly, 'Yes—yes!' and turn to me and whisper, 'Was that my mother?'

"And what could I do, ma'am, what could I do but bend my head down over the poor darling and not let her see the hot tears come rolling down my cheeks? It was then that I felt how I had been cheating myself and holding myself up with false hopes, and all the time that what she said was true, for though I was holding her tightly to me—tightly as she clung, it was all of no use, for something was drawing her slowly and surely away.

"I tried more than once to smile and say something cheery to her, but she only looked strange at me, and said 'Don't, please,' and then soon after she said, in a sort of dreamy way, 'Tell me what it's like, and whether I shall see my mother there.' 'What what's like, my pet?' I says, shivering the while to hear her talk so. 'What Heaven's like and all about going there!' And what could I tell her—what could I say about such things? A poor ignorant man.

"I felt frightened like, ma'am, to hear her so constantly talking about something drawing her away. I know now that it was from the dreamy, troubled state of her head, while she always talked so about her mamma. I taught her to say that, you know, ma'am, for I hoped that some day she would be fetched into her proper speer and be well off, and that's why I did my best to improve her mind, and taught her her catechism and so on. And so she is well off, better than she ever could be here; but I couldn't bear to part with her, and it was not in that way I meant."

Time after time Tim glanced wistfully from face to face as if to see what effect his words had, and then he altered and rearranged the mourning band around his hat, smoothing it, brushing it with his gloves, and at last setting it upon the table.

"It seems to do me good telling you all about it, Mrs. Pellet, ma'am; but for all that the words seem to tear and burn, only I know that you all here used

to like and take kindly to the little ill-used thing, as anybody must have loved her who knew her. And do you know," said Tim, solemnly, "that's why I think she was took away, because she was too good for the life below here? You don't lose no little ones, ma'am, because they are happy, and well off, and well treated. Nothing comes, drawing of yours away like they did my poor pet, as I can always hear whispering to me. And when I wake of a night for a few moments I always seem to feel her little, hot hand nestling in my breast, and feeling after mine to put under her hot cheek."

Mrs. Jared shivered, and looked as if about to run upstairs and see whether her own little ones were safe.

"But she was wanted," said Tim, sadly; "and I shall never forgive myself—never—never—never."

And sinking back in the chair behind him, Tim Ruggles gave free vent to his sorrow, bowing his head down almost to his knees, covering his face with his hands, crying like a child, his sobs seeming to tear their way from his breast, as heedless of all but his overwhelming grief, he rocked himself to and fro in the bitterness of his anguish.

For some time there was deep silence in that common room, broken only by the almost hysterical sobs of poor, weak Tim Ruggles. Mrs. Jared and Patty crept closer together to weep in union; Mrs. Jared making it appear though—a piece of base dissimulation—that she was only comforting Patty, while Jared rose to rest a hand upon the poor fellow's shoulder and whisper a word of comfort.

But Tim wept on passionately, for the grief that had been thrust down and daimned back for days past now burst forth with a violence that could not be stayed—as, still blaming himself for what he looked upon as some lapse of duty, he groaned in the anguish of his spirit.

"I shall never forgive myself!" exclaimed Tim, suddenly leaping from his chair—"never! I lay down beside her for a bit that night, with her cheek upon my hand, and dropped off; but she moaned in her sleep, and that woke me, and I gave her some drink, when 'Please take me!' she whispered; and her little voice sounded—oh! so cracked, and hard, and strange. So I took her in my arms, so light she was; and then, having been watching night after night, I felt drowsy again. So I propped myself up with my back to the wall in a corner of the board, with that little head nestled, as it had been scores of times, close against my breast—her little arms were round me—and then rocked her to and fro for a bit gently, till she began to moan again quite softly, as she had often done of late in her sleep; and then, instead of keeping awake, I dropped off again, and slept for hours, till the light came creeping in through the sides of the blinds.

"Pale, and cold, and scaring, looked the light that morning; and as I woke, cramped, cold, and stiff, a horrible thought flashed through me, turning me so that for a long time I dare not move nor look down. I seemed to have known all that had taken place, and have felt it all just as if I had been awake all night. I did not dream it, you know, ma'am; nor I can't explain myself; but I knew well enough that while I had slept the something that had been

drawing the poor darling away so long had come and taken her away.

"I knew it all well enough in an instant of time, so that what I held so tightly in my arms as I sat there was not little Pine, but only her shape, and fast growing colder—colder and colder, oh! so fast—and yet I could not move.

"There was no moaning now—no sigh—no rattling in her poor little chest—no twitching, restless moving of her little hands—no starting from a half sleep to kiss me, but one terrible stillness; and I'd have given all I had even only to have heard once more the dreadful, painful cough that was gone now for ever.

"I shall never forgive myself," cried Tim, with a fresh burst of emotion. "Only to think of it—only to think that I could not keep awake to watch over her till the last."

And Tim buried his face once more in his hands.

Poor weary watcher that he was, he could not see the loving hand that had closed his eyes, but accused himself angrily—the watcher, through weary night after weary night—the watcher, who had fought back all-conquering sleep till it could be resisted no more, and he was spared the sight of the last brief struggle.

"Yes," said Tim, after a pause, "a week to-morrow since we buried her, ma'am, and I'm going to begin work again on Monday. You said that I ought to have been a woman, ma'am, so you won't be so very hard upon me for what you've seen to-night. I'm better now; for that was there and wanting to come, and," he said, piteously, "you're the only friends I have in the world, and I wanted to tell you all my trouble, but could not do it before to-night."

No sooner had Tim left the house, with Jared to walk part of the way home with him, than Mrs. Jared rushed upstairs to kiss and cry over every one of her numerous progeny, as she satisfied herself that they were all safe.

And sadly were the poor children disturbed by the process; for the light was cast upon their features, and Patty was consulted as to whether this one did not look pale and that one flushed; which last was undoubtedly the case, for the little head had to be fished from beneath the bedclothes, its unintelligible mumbled words being certainly taken for threatened fever.

But Mrs. Jared descended at last, though Jared vowed that she got up six times that night to go into the various bed-rooms—while she owned herself to three—and for a time they forgot their own troubles in their sympathy for poor Tim Ruggles.

CHAPTER XXXIV.—AT AUSTIN FRIARS.

"WHAT name?" said a clerk.

"Pellet—Jared Pellet," said its owner.

"Pellet," repeated the clerk, hesitating. "I'm afraid he's engaged."

And he looked hard at the shabby visitor to Austin Friars, as much as to say, "You're a poor relation, or I'm no judge."

"Tell him his brother would be glad of a few minutes' conversation," said Jared, desperately.

And for the second time he stood gazing about

his brother's busy offices, where, busy over their gaslit desks, some half-score clerks were busy writing.

It was a bitter day, with a dense yellow fog choking the streets, so that eleven o'clock, a.m., might have been eleven o'clock, p.m., save for the business going on around. The smoke-burdened vapour had even made its way with Jared into the offices, but the glowing fire in the polished stove was too much for it, and the fog soon slunk away, leaving Jared shivering alone, as much from a strange nervous feeling as from cold, to be gazed at from time to time by some inquisitive eye.

"This way, sir, if you please," said the clerk.

And then Jared was standing before his brother in his private room—standing, for Richard did not offer him a chair.

"I have come for advice," said Jared, dashing at once into the object of his visit.

"If you had come to me for advice sooner you wouldn't have been in this plight," said Richard, coldly, as he glanced at his brother's shabby garments and the worn hat he held in his hand. "But what is it?"

Jared stared, for to the best of his belief his brother had never given him any advice worth taking.

"Time is money to business people," said Richard, for Jared was silent.

"Yes, yes, I know," he said, and then paused again, as if nerving himself to his task, till once more Richard turned uneasily in his chair and was about to speak. "Bear with me a few minutes, Dick, and I will tell you all. I am in bitter trouble and affliction."

"I suppose so," said Richard, "or you would not have come. There, speak out. How much do you want?"

"What, money?" said Jared. "None. But don't be hard upon me, Dick; the world can do all that. I am in trouble, great trouble; the poor boxes at our church have been robbed."

"Well?"

"Great endeavours have been made to discover the thief."

"Well?"

"And—and by some means a key got into the locker of my organ-loft."

"Yes?"

"And it was found by the vicar, who cruelly wrongs me with his suspicions."

"Yes."

"And I am accused and dismissed from my post."

"Well?"

"What shall I do? Help me with your advice. How am I to prove my innocence? What is best under the circumstances? I feel my head quite in a whirl, and am at a loss how to proceed. The vicar seems to be so convinced of my guilt that he refuses to see me, and returns my letters. All I get from the churchwarden when I assert my innocence is, 'Prove it, sir; prove it.' I have thought by day and by night; I have struggled hard; I have done all that a man can do, but I am as far off as ever. I was not born with your business head; I am not clever; you know that I never was, and at last I turn to you to—"

"To mix myself up in the affair," said Richard, coldly.

"No, no! To advise me—to tell me what I should do," said Jared.

"To get my name sullied, and the substantiality of my house shaken, and my credit damaged, by being drawn into connection with a beggarly, low, contemptible piece of petty larceny! Do you think I'm mad? Do you think I have gone backwards into an idiot? Do I look childish, or in my dotage? But there—some people are such fools!"

To do Richard Pellet justice, he looked neither mad, nor idiotic, nor childish, but the image of an angry, sarcastic, prosperous man, as he threw himself back in his morocco-covered chair, and, stretching out his black-cloth covered legs towards the fire, scowled at his brother.

"Oh, Richard!" groaned Jared, in despair.

"Look here, sir," said the city man in a deep voice—angry, but not such as could reach the ears of the clerks—"look here; we were born brothers, I suppose; we bear the same name, curse it, since it is yours too. You have taken your path in life, and I have taken mine; and they are paths that grow every day farther and farther apart, never to come together. I have never meddled with you, nor asked your help. I have never troubled you in any way; while you—you—what have you ever been but a disgrace—a clog—a drawback to me in my every project to raise our name from the dust? I forget all this, and to be brotherly, try to heal all old sores. I ask you and your family to my house, and what do you do? You disgrace it, not only with your appearance, but also by your behaviour, making my very servants langh in their sleeve at you; and as if that were not enough, your well-trained trull of a child must begin to set her snares and traps, acting with less modesty and decorum than the veriest creature of our streets, until she has, by her artful tactics, destroyed the peace of a happy family, unsettled a foolish boy, and driven his sorrowing mother to the grave."

At this point Richard thought it would be effective to display a little emotion instead of anger, and acted accordingly; while Jared started at the intelligence conveyed in the last words, for he had not heard of his sister-in-law's death, which had been sudden, and he now noticed a deep band round Richard's hat. He would have spoken, but his brother waved him to be silent, and continued—

"And now—what now? You come to me with a lame, pitiful tale, that I may employ counsel for you; have my name dragged into the public courts and papers; to be the talk of the whole city; to be more doubly disgraced by you than I have been before. I don't know you. I hold no communications with you. You bear my name, but I renounce all relationship. I will not be dragged into the matter, for it is none of mine. You always were a fool, now you have taken the step which lay between it and roguedom. Leave my place at once, and quietly. Dare so much as to speak an abusive word in the outer office, and I'll have you given into custody for trying by threats of exposure to extort money; and then, with your character of thief, and the poor-box money behind, how will you stand?"

Richard Pellet, like many more loud men, was gifted with a tongue which, given an inch, takes an ell, and said more than its owner would ever have power or will to perform; and now he had risen, and stood glaring at his brother, with his hand resting upon the heavy chair he had placed between them. For Jared, as he stood almost dumbfounded before his brother, had taken up a ruler from the desk; but not to strike with, he only handled and tapped it with his long, pliant fingers. He could not speak: indignation and sorrow choked him; and he stood there panting and thrusting down anger, bitterness—the whole flood of emotions which rose.

Was this his brother—the last of all men who should have turned against him, apparently leaping at the chance for raising a greater barrier between them—a bar that should last on to the grave? This his brother, who most likely by his business shrewdness and advice could have easily cleared the way towards getting him from his difficulty, employed a detective on his behalf, and had the matter sifted to the bottom? A groan almost burst from Jared Pellet's labouring breast, but he crushed it down. He would go and trouble his brother no more. He would bear his disgrace how he could, for how dared he, a poverty-stricken beggar, conscious though he might be of his innocence—how dared he appeal to the law to clear him? Had not the innocent been transported before now—suffered even unto death upon the gallows; while if they had not felt sure of their array of evidence, would the vicar and churchwarden have accused him? What could he bring up by way of defence? Nothing! He confessed to himself that the matter looked black against him. Perhaps his character for integrity ought to have borne him up in their estimation; but then, as he told himself bitterly, he was poor, and where money was concerned the poor were always held to be liable to fall into temptation. The vicar had been merciful, and would not prosecute; should he then drag the matter before the face of justice and have it investigated? He might be cleared, but he might fail; and then, as he would have forced the matter upon the vicar, and called in the aid of the law, what would be the consequences if the verdict went against him? He dared not think, but stood before his brother, gazing vacantly about, until he spoke again.

"I would have helped you, and done anything, had you ever acted as a brother," said Richard, "or had it been anything where you had not been dishonest; but now—there—there," he continued, thrusting one hand into his breast, "you had better go."

"I am going, Richard," said Jared, meekly, gazing round at the luxurious office, at everything, in fact, but his brother, till the sharp "ting-ting" of a table gong aroused him.

"Show *this person* out," said Richard, harshly, as the clerk appeared.

And then, throwing himself back in his chair, he made a violent rustle as he took up the *Times*.

This was a last cruel stab; one that brought forth a mild, reproachful, even sorrowful look from Jared; one that made Richard wince more than would the most bitter glance. Then the broken man walked

slowly and with bent head, till his hand could be laid upon the door-post, when, turning to look upon his prosperous brother for the last time in this life, he took in the sleek, portly form, the heavy, insolent countenance, and then, in spite of the clerk's impatient "This way, sir," he said, in a low, clear voice—

"God above, who knows my innocence, Dick, forgive you, even as I do."

And then the door closed; and crossing the office, Jared stood once more in the fog—mental and real—till crossing the road he made his way towards Duplex-street; while, though glad at heart to have ridded himself of so troublesome an incubus as a poor relative accused of theft, there was a strange chill fell upon Richard Pellet. It might only have been a dread of another visitor whom he might receive, but he blamed the fog and denounced it heartily; but probably without effect, for it still hung heavily over gloomy Austin Friars.

CHAPTER XXXV.—FRIENDS ON FAILINGS.

"I'M getting soft, and stupid, and blue-moulded," said Mr. Timson, as he stood warming himself before the fire in the vicar's snug little room. "I don't like it—I hate it. Yes, you may look, sir; but I've had that Pellet with me this afternoon, and I can't stand those sort of things. Why wasn't it somebody else, and not that poor, sensitive, struggling fellow—old Purkis, or Mrs. Ruggles, or the clerk? It was pitiful to see that poor fellow—pitiful. Why didn't you suspect and find out somebody else, eh?"

"Don't talk nonsense, Timson," said the vicar; "but it's a bad job—very."

And the old gentleman sighed.

"Bad job? Ah! I should think it is a bad job," said the churchwarden. "Now, what would it take to square the matter?"

"What! Make up for what he has stolen?" said the vicar—"nothing; no amount. The sin is there, and it cannot be removed."

"S'pose not," said Timson; "or, 'pon my word, if twenty or thirty pounds put in the poor-box would make you feel that it was all right again, I really think I should feel disposed to find it—'pon my soul, I should."

"Don't be irreverent, Timson," said the vicar; "a man's word is never strengthened by an oath. I detest swearing."

"Swearing!—that's not swearing," said Timson. "That's only being emphatic."

"Then don't be emphatic, Timson; but speak plainly, like a man."

"Humph," ejaculated Timson.

And then followed a long period of smoking.

"Only to think of a man with his talent being a thief," said the vicar, at last. "He came here; but I would not see him."

"Why not?" said Mr. Timson, bluntly.

"Because I'm weak, Timson—weak; and might be tempted to give way against the dictates of my conscience."

"Well, 'tis hard—'tis hard," said Timson. "I was ready to give way myself; and I don't know now but what I believe the poor fellow."

"What did he say, Timson?" said the vicar; "for I won't see him. I would not believe in his guilt till it was forced upon me; but now I am fixed."

"What did he say?" echoed Timson; "why, that it's all a mistake."

"I wish it were—I wish it were," said the vicar, who seemed truly grieved; "but let him prove it—let him prove it."

"Just so; I quite agree with you, sir," said Timson. "The very words I said to him. 'Prove it, Pellet,' I said, and there's my hand; and I thought then that he was going to snatch it, so I put it out of his reach."

"Such a musician," exclaimed the vicar, "and to think of his proving a thief."

"Just like 'em," said Timson; "they all steal one another's work, and call it inspiration. But don't you think we might put it a little milder? Thief's an ugly word, and er—er—"

"Well," said the vicar.

"What do you say to embezzlement?"

"Embezzlement, Timson!" exclaimed the vicar, indignantly. "Why, sir, it's a sacrilege—an abomination."

"But you know it might be a mistake after all."

"I wish I could think so—I do, indeed, Timson. But it can't be; you had your own suspicions of him."

"Well, yes," said Timson, drily; "I did, certainly; and of a few more too."

"Then you remember how confused he was in the church that day. I couldn't help thinking something of it then; and besides, look at the long hours he spends in the church alone. I've known him to be there hours, and not a sound escape from the organ; no boy there, in fact. All seems to tend the same way towards proving that he has yielded to temptation when troubled by poverty."

"Well," said Timson, "it's a bad job, but I'm glad that you don't mean to prosecute."

"You think that the better plan then, Timson, eh?" said the vicar.

"Best? Yes, of course. Do you want to put the father of about a score of children on the treadmill, and have them come shrieking in your ears for bread?"

"God forbid," said the vicar. "I quite hold to your way of thinking. I should never have done for a magistrate, Tim. They wanted me on the bench when I was in the country, but I backed out, for I knew that I should be too easy. No, Timson, I would not deprive the poor fellow of a chance of making an honest living in the future, for you see he is a man who has yielded once to temptation, and will repent to the end of his life. No, sir, I would not mar his future for the world. I'm not one of those men who prosecute on what they call principle. Perhaps I am wrong, but I am not unmerciful. I believe him to be a good man at heart, but one who has been sorely tried by poverty."

"Then, why didn't he come and ask me to lend him a few pounds?" grumbled Mr. Timson.

"The wrong sort of man, Timson; but I'm sorry for him, very."

"So am I," said the churchwarden, gruffly.

And then they had another long smoke.

"You won't tell him right at the very last that he may stop on, I s'pose?" said Timson. "Let him think like that he's going to be hanged, and then at the last moment send in a reprieve?"

"No, Timson, no," said the vicar. "Duty is duty, and I should not be doing mine if I looked over so flagrant an offence."

"But you won't alter your mind—you won't prosecute?"

"No, sir, no," said the vicar. "In spite of all, I respect the man, and the way in which he has brought up his family. I am sorry, deeply sorry for Mrs. Pellet and his daughter; and really, now, I'd give a heavy sum to have him proved innocent—I would, indeed."

And to give emphasis to his assertion, the old gentleman brought his fist down heavily upon the table.

"Mind the glasses," said the churchwarden, pushing them a little further from his friend.

"It's very sad," said the vicar, "and with such a family, too! How many has he?"

"Scores," said the churchwarden.

"Don't be a fool, Timson," said the vicar. "This is no laughing matter. Suppose you were in the poor man's position?"

"Shoo—shoo—shoo—shoo—shoo!" exclaimed Mr. Timson. "What do you mean? Who is a fool, pray? I'm not one, am I? And what's the good of supposing impossibilities. Fool indeed!"

"I did not say that you were one," replied the vicar. "I only said 'don't be.'"

"That's prevaricating," said Mr. Timson, who, quite roused, looked violently angry. "I consider fool a strange title to call an old friend, Mr. Gray."

"Sit still, Timson, and shake hands, and don't be an ass," said the old gentleman, warmly.

And as he spoke he held out his hand, with the accompaniment of a look that wiped away the epithet, for the churchwarden shook the hand as warmly as it was offered.

"But," said Mr. Timson, just to show that he still rankled a little, "it seems too bad to pity the poor man now, when a little—when a little assistance would have kept him from what you say he has done."

"Say he has done!" exclaimed the vicar. "Well, look at the proofs! Have I not my duty to perform the same as any other man?"

"But it does really seem a very hard case," said Mr. Timson, "and I should let him off. I've none of your fine susceptibilities; they don't seem to go with tea dealing."

"Won't do, Timson; it won't do," said the vicar. "I can't think the same as you do. But it's a very, very hard case; and I would I could go to the poor fellow and say—'Mr. Pellet, it's a mistake; pray forgive me.'"

"I should like to go with you on that journey," said Timson.

"But not a word of the matter to any one else. I would not have it known to a soul in the parish. Let him stay there till his time has expired, and then go quietly where he will and try and begin a new life. Keep it quiet, Timson, for both our sakes. It would be hard for Pellet to feel the finger of scorn

pointed at him; and for me, people might say I was to blame for not prosecuting, and also for letting him stay on till Christmas. If it becomes known, let the onus rest upon himself, and not upon us, for we might be doing him a mortal injury. He has done wrong—not the first, by a great many; let him see the evil of his ways and try to repent. I can't think him bad at heart; and all I can say is that which I said in my letter—let him seek for forgiveness from Him whom he has sinned against."

"Amen!" said Timson, solemnly.

And then the two friends sat on far into the night, smoking pipe after pipe, while the little kettle boiled on until it was quite dry, a fact discovered by Mr. Timson when he had just placed more sugar and spirit in his tumbler. But, though more than one discussion took place, and the painful affair was probed over and over, that night there was no cribbage.

CHAPTER XXXVI.—JARED'S TROUBLE.

"AND the box not been touched since," muttered Jared Pellet. "Not been touched since."

And he repeated the words which he had heard from Mr. Timson but a few days before, as he stood in the porch of the old church, looking straight before him in a hopeless, dreamy way. He had no occasion to be there—he had no business to be there; for he had conducted the service for the last time, and on the next or following day he would be called upon to give up his key. But that organ seemed to draw him there, so that he dreamed over it, clung to it, as he recalled how that he must give up, and in such a fashion.

They knew nothing, suspected nothing, at home; they only said that he practised oftener than ever; that he hurried through little jobs to get to the church, where he spent long hours gazing in the reflector and dreaming of the past and future, or making the passengers in the street pause and listen to the grand old strains. At times he could not bring himself to believe that it was true; but the inexorable crept on till he could feel that he was only there upon sufferance, and blamed his want of pride in not giving up before.

The Reverend John Gray had ceased his monetary discourses, and bowed austere when once he encountered Jared, who shrank back, although he had fully determined to address him. Mr. Timson, too, gave him no further opportunities for conversation, but passed him at a half trot, with both hands under his coat tails, giving him short, sharp, defiant nods. Even old Purkis grew strange and constrained, backing away from him and bursting forth into a dew of perspiration which entailed no end of mopping and wiping. As for Mrs. Ruggles, she never had been in the habit of bending to sociability, so that her stiff formality was passed unnoticed.

No, there was no keeping away from the old place now; and day after day Ichabod grew richer with the many coppers he earned as Jared tortured the instrument into the giving forth of wondrous wails and groans. No jubilant strains, but all sorrowful and in harmony with his broken spirit.

Twelve o'clock; Ichabod dismissed, and the hour

just struck by the old church clock in a halting, broken-winded manner, as if the job was too much for it, while an ordinary listener would have been tired out before it got half way. But Jared listened, and shivered and shuddered too, as, after beating laboriously its heaviest task, it set in motion certain hammers which knocked *Adeste Fidelis* out of the bells, beaten out notes that came in a jerky, disjointed fashion, and muddled up with their rests—now one in its place, now three or four blundered together, as if in a hurry to finish a performance of which they were heartily ashamed.

But Jared stood it out, telling himself that most likely it was for the last time. Then he tried the church door to make sure it was fast, and afterwards slunk off slowly, and apparently believing that people could read the crime of which he was accused branded upon his forehead. Perhaps that was why he crushed his hat down over his eyes, and bent his head, so as to encounter neither scowl of avoidance nor pitying glance.

In Duplex-street at last; and pausing to pull his face three or four different ways, so as to get upon it a pleasant expression before inserting his latch key and entering, to stand rubbing his feet upon the worn old mat, which had to be held steady with one foot while the other was cleaned, and had been so affected by time that, hydra fashion, it was fast turning itself into two mats of a smaller size. Then it took some time to take off the old black kid gloves, which Jared had cut down into mittens, in consequence of finger dilapidations, or, as he said, to keep his hands warm when playing in the fireless church.

But there were cheery voices ascending the stairs; so, putting his last sigh away, like his umbrella, in a corner, he descended to the kitchen, and tried to enter; but the door handle only turned round and round, and would not move the latch. Directly after, though, there came the sound as of some one wriggling it back with a knife blade.

"There, don't touch me," cried Patty, "or I shall flour you all over."

The warning came too late, for Jared had already taken her in his arms, to place a couple of kisses upon her blooming cheeks.

"There, I knew I should," she continued, "and if I touch it I shall make it worse. But, father, dear, I'd have that lock mended, or we shall all be fastened in some day."

"Ah!" said Jared. "Now, if it could be repaired with glue, I might manage it myself."

But as that seemed impossible, Jared began to hum a tune, his thoughts the while hanging upon the subject of his dismissal, as he wondered whether they had yet any inkling of the secret which oppressed him.

"Time enough for them to know when all is over, and I've given up the keys," he muttered; "for even yet, something may be found out; if not," he thought bitterly, "we must starve."

"Has the vicar been or sent?" he said, in husky tones; but assuming all the indifference possible.

"No," said Mrs. Jared; "I've been thinking about him all day. Isn't he late?"

Jared thought he was, and said so. But all the same he had not expected him, only a cheque for his

last quarter's salary—money always heretofore paid to a day, though it was not likely that upon this occasion the vicar would follow out his old pleasant custom, and bring the cheque himself. But Jared told himself that he might do so; for drowning men are said to clutch at straws, and Jared was drowning fast. He had kept his head above water a long time, but now all seemed at an end, and the waters of tribulation were about to close over his head.

Mrs. Pellet and her daughter were too busy to notice the change that had come over Jared; while now, as if his misery were not great enough, the straw seemed suddenly to be snatched from the drowning man, as there came the terrible thought, suppose that the vicar should not come at all—suppose that, taking into consideration how he had refrained from prosecuting, he should consider the quarter's salary as forfeited.

Not a heavy sum, certainly; but to Jared the want of it would be ruin piled upon ruin—a cruel heel crushing the head already in the dust.

"He told me to clear myself—to prove that they were wrong, and what have I done? But there, absurd, they could not keep back the money, it would not be legal."

But suppose that, legal or illegal, they kept it back to make up for the missing money, how then? The vicar would not do such a thing, he was too kind-hearted; but Timson might prompt him—Timson, who had always been so ready with his suspicions. He would go and tell him to his face of his cruelty to a wronged man. He dared meet him, though he now shrank from encountering the vicar. But no, he was too hasty; the money was not legally due until he had formally given up the organ keys. But if they did keep it back, that twelve pounds ten, could he not take legal proceedings for its recovery? How, when they had been so lenient to him?

"Lenient," his brow grew wrinkled as the word flashed over his mind. Was he not innocent, unless he had committed the theft in his sleep—walked to the church from sheer habit; but absurd! he was innocent. "Prove it, sir; prove it," rang in his ears; and he seemed to see before him the stiff figure of the little churchwarden, with his hands stuck beneath the tails of his coat. "Prove it, sir; prove it."

And how was he to prove it?

Jared Pellet was a good actor, schooled in adversity; but on that day he was about worn out, and a less shrewd person than his wife would have seen that something was wrong. She noted it directly, and attributed it to the fact that they had not a penny in hand. He tried to laugh and be cheery, but his attempts were of so sorry a nature that Mrs. Jared looked hard at him, when he seemed so guilty of aspect that he was glad to call in the aid of his pocket-handkerchief and make a feeble attempt at a sneeze.

"You won't mind a make-shift dinner to-day?" said Patty, intent upon her task of preparing the repast.

Needless question to one who had practised the art of making-shift for so many years, and to whom a good dinner was an exception to the rule.

"Been wanted since I went out?" said Jared, after

declaring that he should enjoy the make-shift above all things—"been wanted?"

For it was a pleasant fiction with Jared that he did a large business in the musical instrument line, and that it was not safe for him to be away for a



minute, though it was not once in a hundred absences that he was wanted; but it was business-like, and he asked.

The answer was just what he expected—in the negative; but it came in so dreary a tone that Jared stared.

The reason was plain enough: Mrs. Jared had caught his despondent complaint, and was rocking the baby over the fire, as she counted up the holes that cheque was to stop, in connection with unpleasant demands for money, which she would have to answer meekly and with promises. The tears rose to her eyes as she thought of it all—tears reflected the next moment in those of Patty.

"My God, if they only knew all," groaned Jared to himself, as he saw the tears, "what would they say?"

But he felt that he must stave it off for a little longer, so he planted a child on either knee so as to have something to do, and then declared himself to be ravenous for want of food.

Poor Patty finished her preparations. She brought out the scrap of cold mutton, and took up the potatoes and plain boiled rice pudding, but her merry smile was gone. She too had her troubles, and it took but little to upset her. As she caught sight of her mother's sad face she had hard work to keep her own tears back, for the chill that seemed to have come upon their home had struck to her heart, schooled as it had been to trouble.

CHAPTER XXXVII.—EXPECTANCY.

IT was a bitter day without, and now it seemed as cold within. The very fire in the bright little grate seemed to have turned dull, and the air colder. As to the cold scraps of mutton they were perfectly

icy, and the fat flew off in chips and splinters. A cloud had settled down upon the house, so that there were even great tears round the potato dish. As to piercing the cloud, all Jared's efforts were in vain, for as fast as he tried to shine in a warm and genial manner to disperse this oppressive mist of adversity, he encountered one of Mrs. Jared's looks, which he interpreted to be suspicious—doubtful—and one way and another the meal was not cold to a degree, but to many.

There was no work to do that afternoon; no musical cripples to doctor orthopædically; no cracked instruments to solder, putty, or wax-end; no bellows to mend, hammers to reft, or false notes to tune in accordion or concertina. Trade was at a standstill, and Jared wondered how he could get through the afternoon till the hour when he had appointed Ichabod to meet him at the church for a last long evening practice at the old organ.

But the dinner was hardly over before the postman came by. Jared knew his legs as they passed the area grating, and ran up-stairs to see if he were coming there. For a wonder he was, and, as may be supposed, he left a letter.

Strange hand, and yet familiar. It must be from the vicar. But no, it was not his hand, Jared knew that too well; and his fingers involuntarily felt in his breast pocket for the missive which contained the key—a missive that he had of late told himself that he ought to have taken to a good solicitor for advice, instead of quietly sitting down beneath the onus cast upon him.

But, perhaps, under the circumstances, the vicar had felt disposed to let some one else write and send to him. It must be the cheque; there could not be a doubt about it. No one else would write to him, unless—unless—



Jared's brow grew moist, as in his ignorance of such matters he stood trembling with the letter in his hand. Might not the vicar have taken legal proceedings, and sent him a summons now that his time had expired?

That was a dreadful thought, and embraced innumerable horrors—the felon's dock, police van, cells, convicts, servitude; and worse, infinitely worse, than all—a starving wife and children. Jared had a hard fight to recover his composure before going down again, where he tore open the letter.

Mr. M'Briar, the landlord, had sent his compliments and a reminder that though the rent for the quarter ending at Christmas would be due in a few days, that for the quarter ending at Michaelmas had not yet been paid.

Jared doubled the letter again very carefully, so as to hit the right folds, replaced it in the envelope, and handed it to his wife, who had the pleasure of taking it out and reading it, when Jared saw a tear fall upon the paper and make a huge blot, turning the sheet of a darker colour as it soaked in.

Tears breed tears, and two bright drops sprang to Patty's eyes as she thought of her own sorrows—of Harry Clayton's silence; and she began to think that he could not love her or he would surely have made further attempts to overcome her father's scruples.

Did she love him? She asked herself the question, and replied to it with burning cheeks that she thought she did; and directly after that she was sure that she loved him very, very much. Oh, how gladly would Patty have gone upstairs and thrown herself upon the bed to have a long, long girlish cry.

"Would not Richard lend you a few sovereigns?" said Mrs. Jared to her husband, in a whisper.

"No, no; don't, please," cried Jared, in a suppliant voice—"anything but that." For in an instant he had conjured up the figure of his angry brother and his disgrace; that brother calling him villain, thief, and scoundrel; upbraiding him once more for bringing disgrace upon the name so honoured amongst the money-changers of the great temple of commerce. "You know how I have asked him before, and what has been his reply. I can't do it again. But there," he said, cheerfully, "don't fidget; things will come right; they always do if you give them time enough, only we are such a hurried race of beings, and we get worse now there are steam engines and telegraphs to work for us."

To have seen Jared then it might have been supposed that he was in the best of spirits, for he began to hum scraps of airs, beginning with "Pergolesi," and ending with the "Ratcatcher's Daughter." Having no work of his own, he attended to the fire, to clear away its dulness; but he did not succeed well, for the coals were small, and the stock very low. Then he nursed the baby for ten minutes; in short, he tried every possible plan to raise the bitter temperature of the place.

"Let it come in its own good time," he muttered; "there's no occasion for them to meet the trouble half-way."

Six different times, though, was Jared at that window, watching with beating heart figures dimly seen through the grating bars—figures which had slackened pace, or stopped, as if about to call. Once Jared turned with a deceptive smile, declaring that an old gentleman had passed so like the vicar that he was not even sure that it was not him gone by in mistake.

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Jared, sadly, rejecting the comforts intended for her.

And no one called at Jared's house, while he felt that he could not ask for the money. Had he been differently circumstanced, he would have refused it altogether; but with a wife and large family, debts, and no regular income, it would have been madness.

Once he had declared that he would tell all, and be out of his miserable state of suspense; but the next minute, with a shiver, he had again put off the disclosure, and moodily began to think over the treatment he had received where he had asked counsel and advice, the hot blood rising to his cheeks as he recalled the manner in which the behaviour of his child had been interpreted.

Five o'clock, and no vicar, no money, and Jared to some extent rejoiced; for he dreaded the vicar's coming, lest the reason of his leaving should be mentioned; and now he brightened up with the thought that it might be possible to conceal the true cause of his leaving the church from those at home, for, instead of looking there for advice and comfort, he shivered with dread lest it should come to their ears. As to Purkis and the Ruggleses, he would move—go somewhere where he was not known, and where his friends could not find him, making what excuse he could.

"Business could not be worse," muttered Jared to himself.

And then he turned to the social meal, resting his hand for a moment upon the head of Patty, who was deepening the hue of her cheeks by making toast, half sitting, half reclining upon the little patch-work hearthrug, in an attitude which bespoke strait waistcoats and padded rooms for any artists who might have seen her. For if Patty's face was not beautiful the same could not be said of her figure, wrapped by the fire in a rich, warm glow, which caressed the smooth long braids of her rich brown hair, and flashed again from her eyes. And only to think all this ready to be Harry Clayton's for the asking. Well might Patty sigh because there was no Harry to ask.

"There's some one now," cried Jared, excitedly, as the scraping of feet was heard upon the bars of the grating; and then a footstep stopped at the door, followed directly by a heavy knock, which reverberated through the little house. "Here, Patty, show a light."

But before Patty could get half-way up the kitchen stairs she heard the front door opened, and a gruff voice exclaimed—

"For Mr. Morrison, and wait for an answer."

"Next door," said Jared, in a disappointed tone.

"Why don't yer get your numbers painted over again, then?" grunted the voice, which seemed to consider an apology as a work of supererogation. "Who's to tell eights from nines, I should like to know?"

"No message for any one of the name of Pellet, eh?" said Jared.

The visitor muttered something inaudible, and then came the noise of a heavy thump on the door of the next house, when Jared sighed, closed his own door, and turned to meet Patty.

"I would not have that man's unpleasant disposi-

tion for a trifle, my child, that I would not," said Jared.

And then he descended, to find his wife in tears, Patty fighting hard the while to keep her own back, and do what he could, Jared Pellet, organist of St. Runwald's, could not pull out a stop that should produce a cheerful strain where all seemed sadness and woe.

The tea was fragrant though weak, the toast just brown enough without being burned, while the children ate bread and butter just as if, Mrs. Jared said, it grew upon the hedges; but the social meal was now unsocial to a degree. Mrs. Pellet hardly spoke while Jared drank his tea mechanically—three cups, and would have gone on pouring it down for any length of time if a reference to the Dutch clock had not shown it to be a quarter to six.

Jared hurriedly rose in remembrance of his appointment, and prepared to start.

"If—if," he said, "the vicar or a messenger should come, don't let them in, but send them to me at the church."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.—IN THE CHURCH.

OUT into the keen night air went Jared Pellet; but as soon as he was outside his door his heart seemed to sink down heavy, heavier, heaviest, for he was going for his last practice; the old church was to peal with chords from his hands for the very last time; and filled with bitterness he strode on, thinking of the day of his triumph when in preference to so many he was chosen organist; of the bright visions of prosperity he had then conjured up—all faded away now to leave nothing but desolation. There had been a heavy fall of snow, and the streets were hushed and still, even the wheels of the few vehicles seemed muffled. He shivered with the cold and at the silence, which seemed oppressive. There were few people about, and though as he saw them coming the sight was welcome, Jared Pellet shrank away lest they might divine his misery. He could hardly believe in such sorrow as now seemed his lot, whilst he was ready to utter maledictions upon the head of his brother who heeded them not, but upon whom he laid the blame of making him flinch from telling wife and child the whole story. Was he not now a suspected thief, a beggar; and should he not soon be looked upon by wife and child as a hypocrite and deceiver? Well might he in his abstraction be hustled and jostled by those he met, for at times his gait was almost that of a drunken man.

Six o'clock was striking as he reached St. Runwald's, but there was no Ichabod present, neither was he overing the little fat tombstone that had sunk so far into the earth, nor making a snowball in the path; so Jared kicked the snow from his boots, unlocked the great door, walked in, and, in an absent fit, locked himself in the great gloomy church. Not that it mattered, for Ichabod Gunnis had forgotten the practice long before he reached the yard, and at this time, in company with three or four birds of a feather, he was lying in ambush in a court, from whence he could "heave" snowballs at the drivers and conductors of the various "buses."

So Jared Pellet told himself that it was for the

last time that he was standing in the gloomy old church; and rapping his teeth with the key he slowly made his way to the organ loft, where, after five minutes' fumbling, he found his match-box, and lit the single candle by which he practised, abstaining from touching the blower's dip until such time as that functionary came.

And there sat with bended head the desolate man, the centre of a halo of light, which dimly displayed his music, the reflector, and the keys and stops; above him towered the huge gilt pipes, while from every corner looked down the carven cherubim, here and there one with a flash of light upon its swollen cheeks. The building was intensely dark, for the light from street lamp and shop shone but faintly through the windows. The snow from without sent in a ghastly glimmer sufficient to show the black beams and rafters high up in the open roof, where dust and cobwebs ruled supreme. The tall aisle pillars stood in two ghostly rows, while upon the funereal hatchments between, lay here and there a streak of light, shot through some coloured pane to lend a bar sinister never intended by the herald painter. Now it was the tablet-supported napkin draped over a carven angel that caught the light, and stood out strangely from the surrounding darkness, while all below was black, deep, and impenetrable—a sea of shadows, with pew-like waves, and a holland covered pulpit and reading-desk for vessels, to stand out dimly from the surrounding gloom. Patchy and ill-diffused was the light, as if tired and worn with its efforts to struggle through the wire-protected stained-glass windows; it rested where it fell, to peer down grimly upon the darkness in the nave.

Four times over, eight times over, times uncounted had the chimes rung out the quarters, and stroke by stroke the hours were told, vibrating heavily through the church, and still Jared sat in the organ-loft, in his old position. He was alone, for no Ichabod had come to rattle the handle and kick at the big oaken door. But Jared thought not of cold or gloom, for his soul was dead within him, as he mourned in the sadness of his heart for the sadness and misery which clung to him, and his inability to ward them off. He could tell himself that he had struggled manfully, hiding his sorrows from those who were dear to him; but now he told himself that he was beaten, conquered—that the hard fight had gone against him, and that he must give up.

But where had that money gone? Who had taken it? Had they still watched and tried to find the thief, or rested satisfied with their discovery? He knew not, though strenuous efforts had been made by more than one; but except in one case the money marked and left in the boxes by the vicar had not been taken, a fact which vicar and churchwarden interpreted to mean that the guilty person was found, and dreaded to touch the little treasure, which seemed to them not to have been disturbed, though, had they looked upon this last money they would have found two marked half-crowns and a florin gone, as if the thief had embraced his last chance of securing the contents for himself.

"What will become of us? Where are we to go?" muttered Jared; and then he wrung his hands and

pressed them to his aching head. "And if they prosecute, what then?"

Jared Pellet shivered as he asked himself the terrible question; while again there in the reflector before him seemed to be every horror with which for days past he had been torturing himself, beginning with the bar of a police-court and ending with masked convicts in prison yards, toiling at some bitter task, and like him, dreaming—dreams within dreams—dreams of wives and children shivering at a workhouse door. He was making the worst of it he knew, but he excused himself upon the plea that it was for the first time, and that never until now had he given up, for he was very, very miserable; and he again wrung his hands until the bones cracked.

"What—what shall I do?" groaned the wretched man. "He will not come now; but if they have sent to arrest me now upon this last day!"

And then again in that reflector he conjured up before him the summons at his own door, the eager step of Patty expecting a messenger from the vicar, and then the poor girl's horror to find the police were upon her father's track. He could see it all plainly enough in that old mirror, and he covered his face with his hands and groaned again—

"What shall I do, what shall I do?" in a helpless, childish fashion.

"Curse God and die," seemed hissed in his ears, and Jared started and roused himself. He had read and heard of men being tempted into rebellion against their Maker; he had known of those who in their despair had been seized by some horrible impulse which had led them to rush headlong into the presence of the Judge—men rich in this world's goods, high in the opinion of their fellows—men to whom high niches had been awarded in the Temple of Fame, and yet unaccountably attacked by that dread horror which so often tempts the wretched prisoner to shorten the term of his punishment. Might not this be akin? Was not this some temptation? Oh! that wandering imagination—that too faithful mirror! Jared shuddered as in it he pictured more than one fearful termination of his career, and saw his wretched wife upon her knees beside something—something against which he closed his eyes, and upon whose horrors he dared not gaze.

Yes, this was some such temptation; but he was a man that could defy it. And starting forward, he seized two or three stops on either side of the instrument, and dragged them out, before running his fingers rapidly along the keys; but the next instant he paused and shuddered, for in place of the organ's swelling tones came the low, dull, rattling, bone-like sound of the keys, to rise and fall and go floating through the silent nave of the old church in a strangely weird and dumb cadence.

He gazed before him into his mirror, but it was a black depth which gave but one reflection—his own ghastly face. Again he leaned forward, and swept his fingers over the keys, as if engaged in playing one of his favourite voluntaries. But he ran through but a few lines, for the low, soft rattle again floated through the church; and then he shuddered as he drew back his hands, for the scrap of candle in his

sconce fell through, darting up one sharp, blue flame, by whose ray the keys of the instrument seemed grinning at him like the teeth of some huge monster; and then all was silence and gloom, suited for his dreams, and the visions that seemed to float before him once more in the mirror—old dreams—new dreams—old dreams with fresh incidents—dreams of his brother mocking and jeering at his poverty, and in his prosperity ever crushing him down—dreams of misery—dreams of happiness, wooing, and wedding, and joy bells clashing out, jubilant and merry. Dreams—dreams—dreams, pictured in the depths of that old mirror, and then darkness, a blank, till cold and shuddering he started up; for it was, as it were, a cold breath of air passing across his brow. Then he was listening to a noise as of a closing door, and then the soft pat as of footsteps—a rustling, the creak of a pew door turning upon its hinges; and slowly turning his head, Jared Pellet sat with dilated eyes, there in the darkness and silence of the old church—listening.

CHAPTER XXXIX.—"WAS THIS GHOSTLY?"

"**W**AS this ghostly—was this spiritual?" Jared Pellet asked himself, as he sat with strained nerve, eager to catch the slightest sound. But now all was silent, and he listened in vain. Cold, almost numbed, he rubbed his hands together, and left his place, slowly descending into the body of the church, confused as one just awakening from a state of torpor. Once he halted upon the stairs for a minute or two and listened; but he heard nothing, and continued his way, telling himself that his imagination was wild and overstrained. Then pausing suddenly upon the matting which covered the nave, his heart's pulsation seemed checked, for from the north door came all at once, loud and distinct in the empty church, a sharp metallic click, and then at short intervals three more, each clear and sharp in the silence, as if money had fallen upon money.

At any other time Jared would have ridiculed as absurd the idea of being alarmed by supernatural visitations; the church at midnight was the same place to him, but for its darkness, as the church at mid-day; but now, broken, unnerved, and trembling in every limb, he stood by the south door as if glued there, listening eagerly.

For a while there was silence, so that he could hear his own heart beat, and he asked himself, what did it mean? Was it some strange influence of the mind, caused by constantly dwelling upon the money in the poor-boxes; or had he really heard the chinking as of falling coin? He was beginning to think, from the silence, that it was a delusion, for he heard nothing more. He strained his eyes in the direction, but they could not penetrate the thick darkness, and at last a bitter smile crossed his features as he told himself that his mind was becoming disturbed with trouble, and that while he yet had a chance he had better seek home and try to rest. Should he walk across the church to the other door and see? Pooh, it was but fancy—a rat, perhaps, under the flooring of the old pews.

Jared felt in his pocket for the key of the door, but it had slipped through into the lining. His hands were numbed with the cold, and he could

not extricate it, for the wards were entangled with the rags.

But *that* was not fancy, *that* was no stretch of the imagination. There was a faint rustling noise, similar to that which he had heard at first, and now apparently coming towards him.

Jared Pellet was probably as bold as most men of his condition, but now, freshly awakened, as it were, from a strange stupor, in a dark church at probably midnight, his blood seemed to freeze, and his teeth chattered with horror. What did it mean? What could it be, that invisible, that softly rustling noise, coming nearer and nearer? He strained his eyes to pierce the darkness, but he could not even see the pew by his side. Should he flee? The door was locked, and he could not get the key from his pocket; and besides, in the horror of the moment he had stretched out his hands to keep off that something strange and rustling, that came nearer and nearer, till he fancied that he could hear breathing; and then the rustling ceased, to be succeeded by a low, dull beat, beat, which he knew directly after to be that of his own heart.

But now, as with a flash, a ray of light crossed his mind, which chased away all superstitious fancies. Here, now, almost within his reach, was the robber of the poor-boxes returning from his unholy errand; the click he heard was that of falling money, and the blood flushed to his face as he told himself that now was the time for action; now was the moment which should decide his fate. How he longed for a light. The night before had been clear and moonlit, so that he could have seen distinctly; but now from the snow-clouds the darkness was intense. What should he do?

"Whoever it is shall not pass out of the church while I have life," he thought, as he smiled at his superstitious folly; but, for all that, as he stood there, with arms outstretched in the intense darkness, his heart still beat violently. Whoever it was had evidently taken the alarm and was listening intently; but now came once more the rustling, accompanied by a sound that Jared made out to be that of a hand drawn along the sides of the pews.

Closer, closer—he could now hear the breathing distinctly; but again there was a halt, during which Jared remained motionless, till the rustling began again and a hand touched the organist's.

All the blood in his body seemed to rush to his heart as he felt the contact of that icy hand; the superstitious dread came back, but he threw himself forward, nerved as it were by despair, and clutched an arm; but only to be dashed violently back, trip over a hassock, and strike his head a sickening blow against one of the stone steps of the font.

That fall drove out the last dread of a supernatural visitation; and, springing up, Jared gave chase to the rustling figure which he now heard half-way down the south aisle.

It was slow work in the dark, but Jared pushed on, now striking violently against some pew door, now stopping half confused in the dark as to where he was; but there was the rustling noise in front, and as well as he could he followed up one aisle and down the nave, then along the other aisle, but apparently losing ground. The flying one was as cor-

poreal as himself, that was plain enough, for more than once there was the noise of collision with open pew doors, which banged to and then flew open again, ready for him to strike against violently.

Twice had they made the circuit of the church, when, feeling that he had neared the figure, Jared sprung forward to grasp nothing, for the noise suddenly ceased. He stopped and listened with head leaned forward, but there was only the beating of his own heart.

This was unexpected. He listened again: no sound. He ran his hand along by the side of the pews, first here and then there; he went forward panting heavily the while; he came back, but he was still at fault. The quarry had doubled somehow, and escaped him for the time, and would perhaps reach one of the doors; and in dread of losing his opportunity Jared ran hastily towards the south door, but only to recollect that there were the north, west, and chancel doors, through one of which the figure might escape while he guarded the south. Then, too, it struck him where he had been in fault: the enemy of his peace must have crept softly into an open pew and allowed him to pass. That was it, no doubt; and hurrying back he was in time to hear the rustling noise very softly at the end of the north aisle, as though his enemy were stealing away.

Swiftly as he could for the darkness, Jared passed on, and once more the chase went on. They had passed round the church again, and Jared felt that he was gaining ground, when he caught his foot in the matting where it had slightly rucked up and fell heavily, to gather himself up again in time to feel once more the rush of cold air upon his cheek, and hear the door locked just as he came up.

Jared's hands trembled with agitation as he tore at his pocket to free the key, dragging out the lining; and then as he held the cold iron in his hand he could hardly find the hole, so that quite a minute had elapsed before he had dragged the heavy door open, and stood amongst the drifted snow in the porch, banged to and locked the door, and then took up the pursuit.

There in the faint glimmering light were the deep impressions of footsteps to the church gates, and Jared grimly smiled as he muttered to himself "A heavy step for a ghost;" but no sooner was he outside the gate than his power of tracking his enemy had gone, for the snow was trampled with footprints crossing and recrossing, while though he looked up and down the street there was nothing to be seen but the sighing of the cold night wind.

Suddenly he fancied that in the distance he saw a figure crossing the road, and dashed after it as hard as he could run. It turned down a street that he knew well, and by taking a short cut Jared felt that he should meet his enemy, if it was the object of his chase; so running down first one street and then another, he neared the bottom outlet of the place he sought, paused a moment to listen, and then could make out the dull, deadened sound of coming steps in the snow, apparently nearing him slowly and cautiously.

To dart round the corner and grasp the new comer was the work of an instant, but only to be

grasped in return, for the organist was in the hands of the police.

"What time is it?" queried Jared, in a confused manner, as soon as he could open his lips.

"Time you was in bed, I think," said the policeman.

And Jared shrank beneath his suspicious looks.

CHAPTER XL.—JARED MISSING.

"ONE o'clock, mum," said Mr. James Chawner, cordwainer, and member of the society of Campanological Brothers, commonly known by the *soubriquet* of Beaky Jem, tenor in St. Runnul's peal. "One o'clock, mum; it's better nor ar' past; but if you and miss, here, is so werry oneasy, I'll get one of my mates to rouse up and search the place—that is, if you like."

Thereby clearly indicating that he—Beaky Jem, of the Roman nose—did not much approve of the task.

"It is so very strange," said Mrs. Jared. "He left here to go to the church, and he must be there."

"Why, bless your 'art, mum, he aint been there, or we must have heard him in the belfry."

"You've been there all the evening, then?" said Mrs. Jared.

"Ah, that we have, mum—'leven of us practising for Christmas. We pulled grandsire caters, 'sire tribbles, and sperlative s'prise major. Never had a finer night, nor more beer up in my time."

"But could you have heard the organ up in the belfry?" said Patty, anxiously.

"Heerd it?—bless yer 'art, yes, miss, a-running away sometimes loud enough to put yer out, and drown the one who leads and cries 'go' when we makes the changes, you know. That there organ aint blowed a note, nor there aint been no light in the church, this side o' eight o'clock. An', besides, I seed the pleece a-kickin' and a-cuffin' of young Leathers for shyin' snowballs at the busties."

"Who?" exclaimed Mrs. Jared and Patty, in a breath.

"Young Charity, mum. Young Ikey Gunniss. Howsomever, if it's a-coming to who'll go, I'll go, you know; but I'm afeared most of our chaps is about tight—just a little sunny, you know," he added, by way of explanation, "for the beer did run free to-night, and no mistake—and I hardly know who to get, without it's a pleeceman, and they are so precious 'ficious. You see, people's abed now; and I should ha' been there myself if the young missus hadn't come and roused me out. I was asleep aside the kitchen fire when she came, for there was a sight o' beer up the belfry to-night, sewerly."

"I still think that he must have gone to the vicar's," said Patty to her mother. "I knocked as loudly as I could at the church door, and there seemed to be no one there."

"Perhaps, after all, we had better wait another half-hour," said Mrs. Jared.

"Let me go with Mr. Chawner," said Patty, eagerly. "The Purkises may have come back now, and they would not mind giving us the keys. I dare say Mr. Purkis would go with us, late as it is. He would have gone with me before, I'm sure, had he been at home."

"I don't like disturbing people so late, but it makes me very uneasy. Do you think the little ones would be quiet while we both went?"

The suggestion now offered by Beaky Jem, that the governor might be a "bit on," was, when interpreted, scouted with scorn; and it was at last determined that Patty should stay, while Mrs. Jared and Beaky Jem went to Purkis for the keys, and then searched the church, with or without the beadle's aid.

"Which he won't turn out of his warm bed, bless you," said Mr. Chawner, "he's too—"

He did not finish his sentence, for as Mrs. Jared, bonneted and shawled, stood with the others in the passage, there came a buzz of voices at the front door, and directly after a gentle double knock.

"There's something wrong, Patty," gasped Mrs. Jared, holding her hand to her side, while the one apostrophized admitted Mr. Timson, the vicar, and Purkis, the beadle, all very muffled and snowy.

"Something struck me that you wouldn't be in bed," began Mr. Timson, but he was stopped by the vicar, who brushed by him just in time to catch Mrs. Jared, as she was staggering to fall.

"Is—is he dead?" she gasped, recovering herself by a strong effort.

"Who, who?" exclaimed the vicar.

"My husband," panted Mrs. Jared.

"God forbid," ejaculated the vicar, piously. "No, where is he?"

"He went out before six to the church, and he has not been back," cried Patty, in agitated tones. "We were going now to search for him—here, here he is!" she cried, as Jared made his appearance, pale and scared-looking, while Patty flung her arms round his neck.

"There, there, there, shut the door," cried Timson, hastily, "it's all right—it's all right. And now what do you want here, sir? You're one of the bell-ringers, aint you?"

"Right you are, sir," said Beaky Jem, staring with all his eyes.

"Just so; all right. Now you're not wanted, are you? No one wants you, eh? There, then, take that, and be off."

Mr. Chawner took "that" and went off—"that" wearing very much the appearance of a warm half-crown from Mr. Timson's pocket. But before Mr. Chawner was outside the door he was muttering, "I knowed he was a bit on; but there was a sight o' beer up our way to-night, sewerly."

"We should have been here hours ago," said the vicar, "but the train was stopped by the snow."

"And he wouldn't have come on till the morning, if it hadn't been for me," broke in Mr. Timson.

"Let me speak, Timson, let me speak," exclaimed the vicar.

"I won't, I'm — blessed if I do," exclaimed Timson, excitedly, altering the run of his sentence. "It was my doing, and Purkis's here; and you know I made you come on to-night."

The temperature was bitter, but upon Mr. Purkis being referred to he grunted, as he stood behind the door busily wiping the perspiration from his face, head, and neck.

"I won't give up to nobody," exclaimed Timson,

pushing past one and then another into the little parlour, so that he might get to Jared. "There, sir, there, Mr. Pellet; it's all right, sir—it's all jolly, sir; and there's my hand, there it is; there's both of them, sir, and hang the grammar! Shake hands, sir—shake hands. There's four honest hands together, and God bless you, sir," and old Timson shook the tears into Jared's eyes, while his own brimmed over from a different cause. "Now you may talk to him, sir," said Timson, who, to further relieve his feelings, caught Patty in his arms and kissed her three times, once on each cheek, and once upon her lips.

"I only meant one, my dear, but they were so good," cried Timson, who seemed half mad, for he now shouted "Hooray," tossed up his hat, and then kicked it as it fell, right into the window, to the total destruction of the cracked pane of glass with the dab of putty in the centre.

"I say 'Amen' to my eccentric friend Timson's remark, Mr. Pellet," exclaimed the vicar, seizing the disengaged hands and shaking them warmly. "Mr. Pellet, sir, you have been an ill-used man, and I beg your pardon. The sinner is found. God bless you, Mr. Pellet!—I hope you forgive me."

"Oh, Mr. Gray, sir—how could you suspect me?" cried Jared.

"Weakness, sir, weakness. I am but an erring man; we all err, and but for my faithful old friend, Purkis, I should have gone on erring."

Mr. Purkis grunted again, and continued dabbing himself.

"He set me right," continued the vicar, still shaking at the organist's hands.

"And me," broke in Timson. "I helped, put him right. But there's my hand, Mr. Pellet—there it is, sir; and I'm glad to shake hands with you once more. I always wanted to; but I kept my hands to myself on principle, sir. But I always said it wasn't you. I told him so, sir, scores of times; but he wouldn't believe me."

"Oh, Timson, Timson!" said the vicar, reprov- ingly. "You know that you were one of the first to suspect him."

"Well, how could I help it when it looked so suspicious, eh?" cried Timson, fiercely. "Don't get putting it all on my shoulders, John Gray, don't, please."

"Shake hands, Timson, shake hands; and let's say, fervently, 'Thank God it is all found out at last.'"

"So we will," said Timson—"so we will. But really you know," he said, "if I had given my honest opinion—honest opinion, you know," and his eyes twinkled, "I should have declared that it was that old rogue of a beadle of ours in the corner."

Mr. Purkis ceased his dabbing, and stared.

"But we could not afford to lose so great an ornament to our church, eh, Mr. Gray, sir, eh?" he chuckled.

And by that time Mr. Purkis saw through the joke, and chuckled too; though he had at first thought it rather a serious matter.

Jared was too agitated and too unnerved with the proceedings of the past few hours to do more than shake hands again and again with his visitors. He

wanted to tell them of his adventure at the church, but he could not speak; and, besides, there were Mrs. Jared and Patty looking perfectly astounded as they tried to interpret the meaning of the scene.

"There, there, there," exclaimed the vicar, kindly. "It is late, and they want to be alone, Timson. Let us go, for you are such a boisterous youth. Let them be, Timson; and come away. But tell me first that you forgive me for my injustice, Mr. Pellet."

"Forgive you, sir!" said Jared, in a choking voice. "There, there," said the vicar, shaking hands again. "What does it all mean, Mrs. Jared Pellet? What, don't you know? More reason for us to go. Come away, Timson—come away. There, you'll wake the children," he exclaimed, as a wail came from upstairs. "Come away, and let Mr. Pellet set the heart of his wife at rest. That's right, Purkis; go first. We should not have been so late; but I was in the country when those two came down, and then the snow stopped us."

"And he said it was too late to come on to-night," cried Timson again; "but I would have my way. There's my hand, Mr. Pellet, sir—there it is, and—there, I never felt happier in my life!"

And, to prove it, Timson made a charge at Patty, who escaped him by running up to quiet the children, who were like skittles, and upsetting one another till there was quite a chorus.

"God bless all here!" said the vicar, fervently, by way of benediction, as he stood in the passage.

And then they would have departed, but for Timson, who turned back to shake hands once more with Jared, exclaiming—

"There's my hand, Mr. Pellet, sir. I always declared it wasn't you."

And again, as Jared stood at the door watching the trio down the street, Timson turned again to shout—

"I always said it wasn't!"

While the gentle, reproving voice of the old vicar was heard to ejaculate—

"Oh, Timson!"

CHAPTER XLI.—MR. PURKIS DOES HIS DUTY.

"WHAT'S this, Mr. Purkis, sir?" exclaimed Tim Ruggles, running into the beadle's shop, so that the bell rang furiously, giving tongue so that it seemed as if disposed to compete with the little tailor, excited and hot as he was with running. "What does it mean, sir; how is it; when was it; and how did it happen? I must know—I must, indeed!"

Mr. Purkis stood erect, with his hands beneath his black linen apron, and puffed out and collapsed his cheeks again and again, but without answering his visitor.

"I must know, Mr. Purkis, sir," cried Tim, again taking his hat off, putting it on, and walking about the shop in his excitement. "I've been to Mr. Pellet, sir, and he won't tell me a word; so I've come to you."

"Well, you see, Mr. Ruggles," said Purkis, slowly, after puffing and gasping two or three times like a fat old tench. "You see—"

"Don't say a word, Joseph, don't commit your-

self," exclaimed Mrs. Purkis, coming forth from the back regions in a great hurry, and busily rolling her arms up in her apron as she came—perhaps to hide their red and chappy state, perhaps from modesty; for of course it is not correct for a lady to appear with bare arms in morning costume—that is to say, by daylight.

Mr. Purkis looked at his wife, and then again at restless Tim, gave a gasp or two, puffed out his cheeks, and then opened his mouth as if to speak; but no words came.

"Don't say a word—don't say anything about it!" exclaimed Mrs. Purkis, again, in a great state of excitement, but unrolling one arm, to place it through her husband's, as if for protection, as she looked defiantly at Tim. "You know what the pleeceman said to the boy when he took him up for stealing the listing slippers—'What you say now will be used in evidence again you.' You're mixed up enough with it as it is."

"Oh, don't—please don't stop him," cried poor Tim, in an agony, as he wrung his hands, and looked from one to the other imploringly. "What does it mean?"

"Well, you see, Mr. Ruggles—" said Purkis, after another tenchy gasp.

"Now, Joseph, don't," cried Mrs. Purkis.

"Hold your tongue, woman," exclaimed Mr. Purkis, majestically—the beadle asserting itself over the husband.

"Don't stop him, pray don't stop him, Mrs. Purkis, ma'am," cried Tim. "What does it mean? Mrs. Pellet began to tell me, when Mr. Pellet stopped her; and now Mr. Purkis begins to tell me, and you stop him."

Mrs. Purkis shook her head fiercely, so that something—probably curl papers, for she was strong in crackers—rattled.

"Please, tell me," said Tim; "it's about that robbery at the church, and Mrs. Pellet says that you, sir, saw Mrs. Ruggles at the box, and then Mr. Pellet wouldn't let her say another word."

"And so I did see her," gasped Mr. Purkis, rattling his halfpence as he spoke; "kiss the book, and take my Bible oath."

"Now, Joseph—now, Joseph," cried Mrs. Purkis, interrupting him. "Don't say another word, or you will never forgive yourself."

"Hold your tongue, woman," cried Mr. Purkis, again more importantly, but without looking at her or taking his hands from his pockets.

"Don't speak to me in that way before people, Joseph," exclaimed Mrs. Purkis, indignantly; and she gave the arm to which she clung a shake.

"Be quiet, then," said Mr. Purkis, importantly, and then he gave two or three more puffs out to his cheeks. "You see, Mr. Ruggles, I've a great feeling of esteem for Mr. Pellet, who is a great musician, and not a better in London. It was through him, sir, that Mrs. Ruggles got the appointment of pew-opener."

"Oh, Joseph," whispered Mrs. Purkis, in a lachrymose tone. "I thought you would. You're a committing yourself, and laying yourself open."

"Be quiet, woman," cried her husband, looking his beadlest. There was only Joseph Purkis, of the

boot and shoe emporium, there, in his black linen apron and shirt sleeves, list slippers, and a strip or two of measuring paper over his shoulder, while he certainly had not been shaved for two days, and was very stubbly; yet you could see a cocked hat with broad lace in the pose of his large streaky head—there was the broad red velvet and gold cape spreading over his shoulders, and his ponderous gilt mace of office seemed to recline against his arm as he spoke. There was a majesty about the man which bespoke command, and he showed it in the way he crushed his wife with a side look. "Mr. Ruggles, you see, I felt hurt to see Mr. Pellet in trouble, and losing his organistship, on account of that pore-box being robbed; for I knew it, sir, I knew it, being p'raps the only man as had his confidence. And it troubled me, sir, dreadful, being plundered again and again; and more than once I was that uncomfortable about it that I could have sent in my uniform to Mr. Timson, sir, which would have shown as I meant to resign, only I knew as my enemy the greengrosher would have took the post, and worn that hat in triumph, too big for him though it was, and padded with brown paper; so I would not send it in, sir, though an independent man, and able to live on my business."

"Oh, Joseph, Joseph, Joseph!" whimpered his wife, "this'll all be used in evidence for the prisoner, and you don't know as the income-tax people aint listening."

"Hush—h—h!" exclaimed Mr. Purkis, removing one hand from his pocket to seize a lady's slipper, and slap the counter with the sole, while poor Tim Ruggles stood wringing his hands, and looking from one to the other. "You see, Mr. Ruggles," said Purkis, waving the shoe, "having the cleaning and polishing of those pore-boxes, I felt as I was answerable for them, and as if I ought to know where the money went."

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CHAPTER XLII.—"PURKIS'S DOOTY" CONTINUES.



EADFUL, wasn't it, sir?" said Mr. Purkis; "they weren't my tills, sir; but they was in my church, and the people as that there money was for was very pore people, as I've presided over at the giving of many a dole at the westry—people as respex me, sir; and after a deal o' consideration, I says to myself, I says, it's some one as goes to the church on week days, and it's either me—"

"Oh, Joseph,

Joseph!" said Mrs. Purkis, beginning to sob.

"Why can't you be quiet now, and let a man speak?" exclaimed Mr. Purkis, with injured importance.

"But—but—you'll be getting yourself into trouble about it," sobbed Mrs. Purkis. "Please, don't let him say no more, Mr. Ruggles."

"Women are so soft, Mr. Ruggles," said Purkis, benevolently.

"Not always, sir—not always," said Tim, standing first upon one leg and then upon the other, and rubbing the nap off his shabby hat, till there was quite a bare place. "Not always, sir; I've known them as was very hard."

"So have I, sir," said Mr. Purkis, importantly, as a county magistrate pronouncing a sentence—"so have I, sir; and I says to myself, Joseph Purkis, you've been parish officer of St. Runnel's a many years now, and with that there stain about the church your uniform is a-getting tarnished, and your superiors will look down upon you until you clear it away. Them boxes are in your charge, and therefore you owe a dooty to yourself to set all right. He did not look at you larst Sunday at all, the vicar didn't, and how do you know but what he 'spects you, same as he may any other innercent person. He may even now think you have a hand in it, and be writing out your resignation for you, and really, Joseph Purkis, I says, 'it looks as if it were either you—'"

"Oh, Joseph!" sobbed Mrs. Purkis.

"Be quiet, woman, can't you," shouted Mr. Purkis.

"Either you," he continued, slapping the counter with the shoe, "or some one else familiar with the place."

"Oh!" gasped Mrs. Purkis.

"Now, just you go in and shut that door after

you, Mrs. Purkis, if you please," said the beadle, more importantly than ever.

And, taking his hand from his pocket, he opened the parlour door as if it had been a pew, and made way for his wife to enter; while that lady, whose society had now become too demonstrative to be pleasant, raised her hands appealingly to the boots and shoes round the shop, as if to ask them to bear witness that it was in spite of her advice Mr. Purkis persisted in committing himself. But the next minute she was invisible, on account of the dingy blind over the half-glass door, and Mr. Purkis walked back with his stately stride.

"So, Mr. Ruggles," he said, "speaking as a man to a man, I felt that for the benefit of all parties concerned it was my dooty to watch, sir, and I did watch, sir—night after night, sir; day after day, sir. And where do you think I was, sir? Why, in the pulpit, sir—high up, with the door jest ajar, and a few cushions to make the place a bit easy; and I've seen Mr. Jared Pellet and Ichabod Gunniss come and go in, and been at my wit's ends, sir, when I've seen that young dog a-sliding down the banisters, or a swinging on the pew doors, for my hands have itched to that degree, sir, to get hold of my cane that I aint hardly been able to bear it. Why, sir, one night I felt a'most ready to bust when the boy came down fust, and Mr. Pellet stopped up thinking, I s'pose, for what do you think the young dog did, sir? Why, he took the kiver off the font, and then, if he did not go and commit sacrilege, and defame and disgrace the beautiful old stone thing by climbing up and then standing upon his head, sir—standing upon his head in the font, and kicking his heels together and playing up the what's-his-name's delight, sir. Oh, he's a bad 'un, that boy. And what do you think he did another night, sir? Put me in a cold persperation, sir, and then made me rise up with that big pulpit cushion in my two hands, and I should have heaved it and knocked him over like a skittle, only I knew it would blow the whole thing, and I sat down and stopped my mouth with my handkerchief to keep down my indignation. What was he a-doing of, sir? Why, I'll tell you—a dog! He'd got both his shoes off, and one in each hand, and he was a-walking all over the church, backards and forrards, and zig-gery zag-gery, balancing hisself like a monkey the while. Not very wrong that, p'raps you'll think, but he was a-doing it all on the narrow edges of the tops of the pews; and hang me, sir, if he didn't try to jump across the middle aisle, only he came down flop, and limped out of the church as hard as he could go. Then I've seen Mr.—what, sir?"

"Pray put me out of my misery," implored poor Tim.

"I'm a-coming to it fast, sir," said Purkis. "I've seen Mr. Pellet come down and stand by the poor-box on the side where the door was open, and sigh bitterly, and go away again; and though I watched a good deal that way I couldn't see nothing wrong out of the pulpit, so, to the utter neglect of Purkis's boot and shoe emporium, and the constant annoyance of Mrs. Purkis, which said it were no business of mine, I kep' on the watching—for I never give

way, sir, not a peg. I'm a lion to that woman, sir, and as long as I'm a lion she's a lamb; but if I was to stop being a lion, sir, it's my belief that she'd be a fierce tiger cat, sir, and I should only be a mouse. Never give way to a woman, sir; they seem made on purpose to be ruled, and if you don't rule 'em, sir, they'll know as there's something wrong, and they'll rule you.

"Well, sir, I took to the t'other side then, and used to get up in the reading-desk, and there I never saw nothing but aggravation; young Ichabod playing pitch and nick 'em with buttons and nickers in the middle aisle, or turning summersets over the hassocks; and once, I declare solemnly, I could hardly bear it, for if he didn't get my mace, sir, and begin by walking up and down, and making believe it was me. Then he must get to balancing it on his chin, till he let it go agen one of the lamp glasses, and cracked it; and I'll crack him for it, now the thing's found out—with the very cane, too, as he took and split out o' mischief. But the worst thing was, if he didn't put that there staff across a couple of free seats, and begin taking races and jumps over it, just as if he was in a playground. Why, sir, it was enough to make the stone images on the monnyments tumble on him and crush him, a bad dog.

"Then I tried the galleries, and I found out nothing there; and at last I took to the churchwarden's pew, for I was determined to keep it up; though I must own, sir, as a truthful man, who will soon be on his oath, but who respex you and is sorry for you, Mr. Ruggles, that I should have found it out sooner if it hadn't have been for the church being so cold of a night that I was obliged to take a drop of something to keep the cold out, for fear it might affect me so as to make me sneeze just at the particular time."

"Please go on a little faster," said Tim, imploringly.

"So, sir," continued Mr. Purkis, "more than once, sir, I'm afraid, I went to sleep in the big pew, same as I did on the night when I woke up and felt horribly frightened at hearing a something rattling about in the middle of the church; and for a time, sir, waking up fresh out of a long dream, where I'd been heading a procession of thieves and policemen and pore-boxes on the way to the Clerkenwell Police-court, I thought it had been something of what my old Scotch friend, Sergeant Pike, used to call 'no canny.' But there, I soon shook that off; and, rising very gently, I peeped over the edge of the pew, and I could see some one going along the middle aisle, and I knew the step as well as could be, besides a crackling stay-bone-and-busk noise, as the figure made whenever it stooped, while it never turned to the right or left without going all together, as if the neck was stiff.

"Then it was a figure?" said Tim, wringing his hands.

"Oh, yes, sir, it was a figure," said Purkis, waving the slipper more and more—"a stiff figure as went softly to first one and then the other pore-box, and I heard a key go, and money chink, just like Mrs. Purkis emptying the till on Saturday nights."

"But, pray—" exclaimed Tim.

"Don't interrupt, sir. Hush!" exclaimed Purkis, pompously, just as if he were frowning down the boys of Gunniss's, and making the chattering young dogs shake in their leather breeches.

And then, gazing mournfully at him, as if he knew all now, Tim, with his face all wrinkles, waited for more.

"I knew the step, sir, and I could see the figure turn all round at once, sir, without moving its head," said Purkis; "and then in my lair I watched and watched, with my heart beating fierce, for I knew the time had come to vindicate inncerence, and to —er—to—er—wait, you know; and I did, till I heard the church door closed softly, when all was so still that it might have been all fancy that I had heard and seen anything. But it wasn't fancy—it was all true as true; and I slapped my knees and rubbed my hands, and then I looked up towards the old organ and nodded at it, for I thought of the wally of what I'd found out, sir, to a good man and no end of a family of children. And then, when I thought I'd waited long enough not to be seen, I went and knocked up old Timson, the churchwarden, fetched him out of bed, for it was one o'clock and past, and when he got down to me in his dressing gown, he began bullying me like anythink, for he fancied, you know, I'd come about my Christmas-piece, boxing, you know, days too soon. 'But gently, sir,' I says; 'don't be rash, don't be hasty,' I says. 'Hasty,' he says, 'I'll report you to Mr. Gray. Get out, sir, you're drunk; I can smell rum here.' 'And a good thing too,' I says, 'sir, for keeping cold out when you're watching pore-boxes of a night in a hempty church.' 'What?' he says. 'What did you say, Purkis?' he says; and for answer I laid a finger up against the side of my nose, and looked at him sideways. 'Purkis,' he says, 'Purkis, you don't mean to say as you've found it out.' 'But I do, sir,' I says. And then I told him all, and he begged my pardon, and then if he didn't go into fits of delight, and danced round the room, and slapped me on the back over and over again. 'Poor old Pellet,' he says, 'I'm glad, out and out glad.' And then he called me a trump, which, though it was well meant, didn't sound respectful to a man holding my office as beadle of St. Runnell's for all the years as I've been. But I didn't show nothing, sir, for he meant well, as I said before; and he gets out something in an ugly little bottle as he poured into two of the wretchedest little glasses you ever see, but when you come to taste it, it was just like what he called it, gold-water he said it was, and he chuckled and danced as he poured it out; and upon my word, sir, it was like swallowing melted sovereigns."

Tim groaned.

"Then, sir," continued Purkis, "I went away a happy man, promising that I'd be with him next morning—no, it wasn't, though; it was the same morning—to run down with him to see the vicar, as was in the country. 'And do you mean to report me, sir?' I says. 'Don't be a fool, Purkis,' he says. 'I want you to tell him with your own lips.'"

"Tell him what, sir—tell him what?" said Tim, piteously.

"That I'd seen—"

"Stop, stop!" exclaimed Tim, imploringly, as if,

now it had come to the point, and he was about to have that which he already knew corroborated, he could not bear it. "I don't think I can quite take it yet. But there—yes, please go on."

"That I'd seen her, sir, as I could swear to, go to the pore-boxes, one after another, and take something out, like Mrs. Purkis emptying the till, and then steal off, sir, so still that you could hardly hear her, only for the clicking of the key in the locks; and then she was gone."

"She was—*she* was gone," stammered Tim, piteously.

"Yes, sir—*she* was," repeated Purkis. "Dark as it was, I could make her out; and then it puzzled me how it was that we should never have settled upon her at first, when we found the money missing. But, you see, she was always so prim, and neat, and respectable."

"Always, Mr. Purkis, sir," said Tim—"always."

"And no one wouldn't never have thought it of her."

"No one, sir—no one," said Tim. And then, sinking his voice to a whisper, he looked anxiously round the shop, dropping his hat, and then starting as he caught Purkis by one of the buttons, "Who was it, sir—who was it?" he said, hardly above his breath.

"Why, you don't want me to tell you, sir, I'm sure," said Purkis.

"Yes, I do—yes, I do," said Tim.

"Then," said the beadle, "I'll tell you," when there came the words "Oh, Joseph!" plainly heard from the inner room, and pointing to the fact that Mrs. Purkis had been listening the whole while.

But her lord heeded not the soft appeal; for, leaning forward, he placed a hand upon Tim's shoulder, his lips close to his ear, and whispered two words, when, with a cry, the little tailor caught up his hat, and dashed out of the shop, while when, after silencing the jangling bell, Mr. Purkis gave one of his customary or customer-seeking looks up and down the street, it was only in time to see poor Tim Ruggles disappear round the corner.

"I knewed you'd commit yourself, Joseph," whimpered Mrs. Purkis, standing at the inner door, and rolling her arms tightly in her apron.

"My dear," said Mr. Purkis, pompously, "it was only my dooty."

CHAPTER XLIII.—RICHARD'S VISITOR.

RICHARD PELLET'S clerk, whose duty it was to show visitors into his private office, ought to have been well paid, for he must have been a valuable acquisition to his employer; doubtless it was the result of training, but it was surprising how often he was found supposing that "the firm" was engaged. It was so when Jared last called, and it was so now, when a plainly dressed, pale and worn-featured woman wished to see him; but if she would give her name, he would go and see.

"Ellen Herrissey."

"Mrs. Ellen Herrissey?" queried the clerk.

"Yes, if he liked," was the bitterly spoken reply.

The man stared, hesitated, went half-way to the inner office, returned, hesitated again, and then turned to go, while more than one head was raised

from ledger or letter, to exchange meaning looks, after a glance at the very unusual class of visitor to Austin Friars.

"It aint my business," muttered the clerk to himself.

And once more passing down the little passage, he opened the private office door of the firm, heedless of a light, gliding step behind him, and announced Mrs. Ellen Herrissey.

"Who?" shouted Richard Pellet, raising his fierce countenance to glare at the clerk.

"Ellen Herrissey," said a quiet voice in the doorway.

And employer and clerk both started, upon the latter turning, to find that he had been closely followed, and that the visitor was already in the room.

"Oh, yes—ah!" stammered Richard, with a miserable, mask-like smile overspreading his features. "Glad to see you; sit down. That will do, Bailey. I'm engaged, if any one calls."

The clerk left the office, and closed the door, walking back to his stool with a raised prominence in one cheek, which drew forth sundry winks from fellow-labourers in Pellet and Company's money mill; but the door of Richard Pellet's inner office was thick and baize-lined, and no inkling of the scene within reached the ears of the clerks.

No sooner had the door closed upon them than the smile was chased from Richard Pellet's face by a bitter scowl, and leaping from his chair, he took two or three strides to where his visitor had stood, hissing between his teeth—

"Curse you, what brings you here?"

Such a fierce aspect, accompanied as it was by threatening gestures, would have made many recoil, but Richard Pellet's visitor stepped towards him, and caught him by the breast, exclaiming—

"I have had strange feelings lately; I could not rest there. I want my child!"

"Curse your child!" cried Richard, in an angry whisper.

And then, with one cruel, cowardly, back-handed blow, he sent the poor creature staggering against the wall. But her countenance hardly underwent a change, as, starting forward again, she caught him once more by the coat, repeating the same words—

"I want my child!"

"How dare you come here—how dare you disgrace and annoy me?" hissed Richard. "How came you away from the home?"

"I left there, and I want my child," was the only reply.

"There, hush, don't speak so loud," said Richard, in an angry whisper, as he glanced uneasily at the door, and then softly slid into its socket a little brass bolt. "Did I not tell you never to come here, and did you not promise?"

"Yes, yes," said the woman, hoarsely, "but I want my child. I have been to the man who kept it. I found him out, but he would not give it to me. I could not rest for thinking about it. I want my child, and then we will go far away together."

"Go and seek it then where it is gone," whispered Richard Pellet, brutally—"it is dead."

"It is a lie—a lie!" cried the woman, excitedly, her pale face flushing with anger. "It is a lie;

you have hidden it away, and that man is in your pay."

And she clung to him fiercely, clutching the ostentatiously-displayed, smoothly-plaited shirt front, and turning it into a crumpled rag.

"Hush! hush! For God's sake, be still; they will hear you in the outer office. I have not got the child—it died a month or two ago."

"It is a lie," exclaimed the woman again, more fiercely than before; and, raising her voice, "I will have my child."

As Richard Pellet's face turned of a ghastly muddy hue, he glanced again and again at the door, his lips quivering, hands trembling, with a cowardly rage that under different circumstances might have made the life of the woman before him not worth a moment's purchase. The coarse, heavy, insolent smile was gone, for he was attacked in his weakest point; and already in imagination he could see the side looks and laughter of his clerks, and hear the sneering innuendoes of fellow-men of his stamp, jealous of the prosperity of his house. What was he to do? He must get this woman away quietly, by falsehood if she would not believe the truth.

The scandal, after so many years lying hidden, would now most certainly be bruited abroad. Some men would have laughed it to scorn, and faced it with brazen effrontery; but Richard Pellet was a religious man, a patron of philanthropic societies—even now upon his table lay half a dozen annual reports of institutions with his name thereon, for all men to read, in large capitals. Why, his very sober, beneficent look carried weight, and he was always placed in the front rank upon the platform at Exeter Hall meetings. In May, in fact, he adopted white cravats and frills, and gave up the greater part of his time to the meetings. And now, in spite of money, care, secrecy, the matter was to be bruited abroad: he could hear it already; and to hide his old sin, had he dared, and could he have concealed his deed, he would have struck down the woman dead before him with as little compunction as he had already with brutal hand beaten her back.

And she? The mild, gentle, imploring aspect was gone—the soft eyes, the pale face, and trembling lips were here no more; and Richard Pellet, as he shrank from the glaring eye and angry face, felt himself to be helpless in the hands of a fury, whose strength was augmented by her position, for he dared not raise his voice. He knew, too, now that it would be in vain; that the time was gone when he could command, and now he must once more try subterfuge to get her away where she would be safely kept; and as he stood there in the woman's grasp, it was with thoughts of private asylums running in his mind, places where once safely incarcerated it would be next to impossible to make an escape—foolish thoughts, of course, since such things could not exist in England!

Pale still, but with a smile forced to cross his features, once more Richard Pellet replied to the reiterated demand for "my child," by taking the woman's hand, and saying, gently—

"Sit down."

"No—no—no," was the hasty reply, as if the

woman dreaded his influence. "I want my child. Give me my child, and let me go."

"But, Ellen, this is madness and folly," he whispered. "You know it is not here. *He* told you that it was dead, did he not?"

"Yes," she cried, angrily; "but it was a lie. You know it was, for you schooled him to tell it. Where is she now?"

"Here, look here," cried Richard Pellet, writing an address upon a card, that of one of the boarding-houses in the neighbourhood; "take this, and go and wait till I come, and we will see about it. But, pray, for my sake, do not make a disturbance here. It will be ruin to me."

The poor daft creature, half rest of her senses by cruel treatment, gazed earnestly in his face for a few moments, while the angry light faded from her view. In her angry, tigress-like rage for her lost little one, if met by anger she was ready to oppose her own maternal feeling, but the gentle words disarmed her resentment; and, falling on her knees at Richard Pellet's feet, she burst into tears, sobbing bitterly as she implored him to forgive her, and let her have her child.

"Yes—yes; get up, then," said Richard, "it shall all be made right, only go now."

"And you will give me my child?" she said, imploringly. "I will not say a word about being your wife if you will give me my child. I know now why you shut me up. It was that you might marry that rich woman. I could not help being weak—mad, if you like. But, Richard, you will give me my child?"

"Yes, yes—only go now," said Richard, impatiently.

The woman rose slowly to her feet, grasping his hand in both her own, and gazing earnestly in his face, as if trying to read his thoughts. And they must have been plain to read; for, as if she read there treachery, cruelty, and a repetition of her long sufferings, she dashed his hand away, and stood once more defying him, with the former rage flashing in her eyes as she repeated her demand.

"Give me my child."

"Go and wait for me there, then," exclaimed Richard, sullenly.

"I'll never leave you till I have my child!" she cried.

Again that cruel, malignant, murderous look, as Richard Pellet cursed laws, protection, everything that stayed him from crushing out that life which now stood in rebellion against him. He cursed his own hypocrisy, which now fettered him with chains, such as stayed him from setting this woman at defiance, and telling her to do her worst.

"I told you before that she was dead," he now said, throwing himself back in his chair.

"Dead, dead, dead!" echoed the woman. "And I told you it was a lie—a cruel lie—like those you have told me before. She is not dead. She was too young, too beautiful, to die. Why, even I—old, and careworn, and miserable—could not die, though I have tried, and hoped, and prayed that I might, again and again. She is not dead; you have taken her away, and I will be cheated no more. She is not yours; she is mine—mine—my very own! Give me my child!" she cried, raising her voice.

"Stop, come with me!" exclaimed Richard Pellet, in despair.

And snatching up an overcoat, and buttoning it closely over the crushed plaits of his shirt front, he led the way into the outer office.

"Back in an hour," he said, abruptly.

And then, closely followed by his visitor, he passed into the street, called the first cab that he encountered, and, after giving some instructions to the driver, he motioned Ellen Herrissey to enter; but she refused, until he set the example, when, following him, the door was slammed to, and the cab drove off.

The clerks in the office had suspended work when the outer door had swung to, and began to give due attention to the discussion of the matter, which was on all sides agreed to be "a rum go," when the door again opened, and Harry Clayton entered, wondering what sort of a reception his stepfather would give him, after what looked very much like neglect; for the intercourse between them after Mrs. Richard's death had been far from cordial, and, after working hard at college, Harry had been spending some weeks of rest with a friend down in Devonshire, and had not even written to his step-father during his stay.

"Mr. Pellet returned?" he asked.

"Back at the office this morning, sir; but he has just gone out with a lady. Said he would be back in an hour.

"I'll wait," said Harry Clayton.

And he waited an hour, and then another; but Richard Pellet did not return; so he left, and slowly sauntered towards London Bridge.

CHAPTER XLIV.—BEATING THE CAGE BARS.

"NOW," exclaimed Richard Pellet, when they were in the cab, "will you wait patiently if I take you somewhere, till I can place you where you can soon see your child?"

Ellen Herrissey gazed long and earnestly in his face before answering.

"Will you keep your word?"

"I will," he said.

And she bent her head; when, lowering the front window, Richard Pellet gave fresh instructions to the driver, who, after about half an hour, drew up at the end of a long, busy street.

"Where are you taking me?" said Ellen.

"Only where you can stay for a day or two," said he, preparing to get out. "Sit still for a few minutes till I come back."

"But you are going to leave me."

"I tell you I will come back," he said, angrily.

And, apparently satisfied, Ellen sank back in the seat.

Five—ten minutes elapsed, and the occupant of the cab gazed from time to time uneasily from the window; but at the end of another five minutes Richard Pellet returned, panting and out of breath, spoke to the driver again, and once more the cab jangled over the stones, drew up at a door which was half open, Richard sprang out, took tightly hold of his companion's hand to lead her in, but she followed him with alacrity, only starting back as the street door closed behind her, and she found

herself in the presence of Mrs. Walls, and her old gaol.

"Only for two days," whispered Richard in Mrs. Walls' ear.

But as he tried to leave, Ellen turned with him, clinging tightly to his coat, when, raising his fist, he struck her heavily in the face, so that she fell back half stunned, with the blood streaming from her mouth.

"Why, you great brute!" exclaimed Mrs. Walls, catching Ellen in her arms, "that wasn't bargained for, I'm sure."

"Hold your tongue!" exclaimed Richard, fiercely. "Keep your engagement, without you would be handed over to the tender mercies of the law."

The woman made no answer, but wiped the blood from Ellen's lips, as, with an angry scowl, Richard Pellet hurried out of the house, and paid and dismissed the cabman, afterwards walking hastily through a few streets, to take another cab and drive off.

"Gone?" exclaimed Ellen Herrissey, gazing about her in an anxious manner, as she tried to make for the door.

Mrs. Walls only nodded, and half led, half pushed her into a back parlour.

"Only for a couple of days, and then he's coming back."

"To take me to my child?" said Ellen.

"To be sure," said Mrs. Walls.

And then the door was closed, and the key turned upon the prisoner, who sank down upon a chair and pressed her hands to her forehead.

She sat motionless for an hour, and then began to pace round and round the room, after trying door and window, to find the former fast and the latter only slid down a little way at the top, the bottom being ground glass, and preventing her from looking out unless she stood upon a chair, and then only the backs of houses and a blackened wall or two were to be seen.

Escape seemed to be the sole idea now in the poor creature's weakened mind. She recalled years upon years of imprisonment, and dreaded their recurrence; for again and again she tried the door, shaking it gently, but it was locked, though the key remained in, so that she could touch the end as it projected through the lock about the eighth of an inch.

Another hour passed, and another hour of torture and dread of treachery, of wonder where she would now be removed to, when a fresh thought seemed to strike the prisoner, now determining to escape at any cost, and, after many trials, she turned the key, so that by means of one of the splints in a vase upon the chimney-piece she could thrust it nearly out of the keyhole, where it hung, while she listened attentively, and then, with one more gentle push, the key fell rattling down upon the oil-cloth of the passage.

Then she stood and listened, before going down upon her knees, and tearing at the tacked-down carpet until she could get her fingers under the edge, and drag it up, leaving the crack beneath the door exposed. There was the key plainly to be seen, for the light from the staircase fell upon it,

but it was out of reach, and the crack would not admit her fingers. She knelt there, biting her nails for a minute, and listening, before taking up the splint that had befriended her, when she tried to reach the key, but it was not long enough. She took another, and by means of a strip from her handkerchief tied two tightly together, and tried again.

Yes, they would pass under easily, and she could touch the key and move it. She could hear it scratch along the oilcloth for some distance in one direction, and then she tried from the other side, and moved it back. Forwards and backwards she moved it a score of times, but it would come no nearer, for there was an inequality over which it would not pass, the floorcloth was doubled there.

Suddenly she stopped, for she heard steps upon the stairs, and Mrs. Walls came by, her dress brushing against the key, and slightly altering its position. Then once more all was silent, but the faint sound of traffic in the street.

The splints again at work—this way, that way—but no sound of grating key upon the floor; and after many trials, Ellen laid her head upon the floor and tried to catch sight of the object of her search.

There it was, just the ring visible, but beyond the reach of the splints.

But three might do it, so another was tied on to the other two, and once more the trial was made.

Joy! They touched the key, but they bent and would hardly move it, from the weakness of the wood.

What should she do? How could she get out? Why did she allow herself to be trapped again like this? Though what did it matter, so that she could see her child? But should she? Would he let her? Had he not said, had not the tailor said, it was dead? But it was a lie, a cruel lie; they had hidden it away from her, where she was never to see it more. And again the crushed woman paced round and round the room, to pause at last to tear at the screws which held the lock to the door, and only to leave off with bleeding fingers.

A new thought, and she darted to the window, tore down the red worsted cord of the blind, and ran to the door. Down upon her knees, with the stiff cord doubled, and a great loop thrust gently under to try and draw the key towards her.

Now it caught, drew it a little way, let it slip, and came through without it; now it pushed it back as the cord was again thrust through. Caught again, and the iron grating over the floorcloth, but only to catch in that obstruction to be lost again.

Disappointment upon disappointment, and a great dread upon the poor creature's mind that her gaoler would return, find out her attempt to escape, and defeat it, by bearing away the key.

Another trial, and another, and another, and again it had caught against that edge of the oilcloth, but now a vigorous snatch, and it had fallen over it, close to the door, and though the cord came through without, she could see the wards of the key, touch them with one of the splints—draw them towards her—touch them with a finger—hold the key in her hand—and be at liberty once more.

Her heart beat wildly with excitement, and then

seemed to come to a dead stop, for as she stood where she had leaped to her feet there came once again the sound of footsteps now descending, and the steps were stayed by the door, where it was evident that some one was listening.

Beat—beat—beat—beat again very wildly for a few moments, then again a few heavy, throbbing pulsations that seemed to make her head ready to split, and then once more her heart seemed to stop. Would, whoever it was, see that the key was gone, and ask for it; would she be compelled to give it up; or would they keep watch at the door to keep her from escaping?

"Do you want anything?" said the voice of Mrs. Walls.

"No, no," exclaimed Ellen, eagerly.

And then her heart beat again wildly, lest her eagerness should excite suspicion.

But no, the steps went on along the passage, and seemed to descend to an underground kitchen, while for five minutes Ellen HERRISSEY stood motionless as a statue.

All silent once more, but the grating noise, as the key was pushed into the lock; then slowly and gradually, by a tremendous effort over self, when she was longing to rush out, the key was turned, creaking loudly in the worn, old lock; but now the bolt had shot back, the handle was turned, and she stood in the passage, after the door had creaked loudly—she stood ready dressed, just in time to hear a sharp voice that she recognized exclaim, "What's that?" and a chair gave a loud, scraping noise upon the floor, as if some one had risen.

There was not a moment to lose; there were steps already upon the kitchen stairs as she darted along the passage to the front door, but it was locked and a great chain up, whose ring was at the bottom of a spiral.

To turn back the lock was but the work of an instant, and then she seized the chain and tried to get it off the spiral, with steps coming nearer at every turn. One—two—three—would it never come off; must she be dragged back again? It was a life-long task condensed in a few seconds. The last turn, the chain falling with a clang, the door dragged open, as a firm hand grasped her shoulder and tried to pull her back, and then a wild, despairing shriek rang down Boston-street as a momentary struggle ensued for liberty.

CHAPTER XLV.—TIM RUGGLES SETS HIMSELF RIGHT.

"MR. PELLET, sir," said Tim Ruggles, "I ran out of Mr. Purkis's shop, like a madman. Yesterday, sir, I think it was—no, it wasn't; it was the day before, or some other time, I don't know when—for my head's all in a wuzzle, sir; and I hardly know what is what. But I ran out of his shop, sir, after he had whispered two words in my ear, and those two words, sir, were 'Mrs. Ruggles.'"

"There!" exclaimed Mrs. Pellet, "that's all a part of the past now, so let it be forgotten. But sit down."

"Yes, ma'am," said Tim, standing in his old position by the chimney-piece—"it's all a part of the

past; but if you'll let me set myself right with your family, I shall be glad."

"Right! Set yourself right! Why, you are right!" said Jared, warmly. "You don't suppose we ever thought that you knew?"

"No, sir," said Tim, still standing, "perhaps not, sir; but I should like to tell you all, sir. It will ease my mind like; so let me be obstinate for once in a way. You see, sir, I was stunned like that morning, and hardly knew what to make of things. Your good lady had partly told me the misfortune, as you may, perhaps, recollect when you came and stopped her, sir, when I rushed off to Mr. Purkis's; and then, after a long talk with him, feeling worse than ever, I rushed off to Carnaby-street, sending the people right and left, sir, for I wouldn't believe it true; and being a married man, sir, which makes two one, it seemed to me that I was in it, and had been the cause of it all, and ungrateful to you, as was the best friend I ever knew. No, sir, I wouldn't believe, though young Ichabod Gunniss had told me, and Mrs. Pellet had quietly told me, and then Beadle Purkis; but when I rushed up into my room in Carnaby-street—first floor back, sir; first bell, two pulls—I knew it was all true then; for there was a letter on the table, as I afterwards found was written to Mrs. Ruggles' friends to say she was coming; and there she was, sir, trembling in the middle of the room, dressed and ready to go, sir—Sunday things on, and three or four big bundles about, with all the best of everything we had got packed up, and there was the four tea spoons and my first wife's brooch, while, when I saw all this, I recollected as there was a cab standing at the door when I came in, and then, without her dropping the bundle she was a-tying up, and busting out a-crying, I knew it all in a moment that it was all true as true, and that she was going off that morning with everything she could lay her hands on, even to my poor wife's silk dress, only I came back just in time to stop her."

Tim Ruggles covered his face with his hands for a moment, and then went on.

"I'm only little, sir, and poor, and weak, and insignificant, and I don't know whether I feel the same as other people do, sir, when they are in trouble; but I would not go into a violent rage, and storm, and swear, and abuse her, sir, and ma'am"—and probably due to the fact of Tim's head being all in a wuzzle, he looked at Mrs. Jared as he said "sir," and at Jared himself when he said "ma'am."

"No, I couldn't do it, sir, for there was a strange sort of feeling came over me, of our having broken the same bread together for years, she being my wife, and this seemed to stop me, though the nearest point I come to was—but there, I'm getting wuzzled. I wasn't frightened, sir, not a bit! I was hurt, and cut, and sore, to think that an honest man's wife should have done such a crime, and then made it ten times worse by getting you suspected, because she had a spite against you, and Mrs. Pellet here, sir, for taking so much notice of my poor Pine, and saying that she was not properly attended to, for I once let it out that you had said so; partly that, and partly because it would clear her, for there was a deal of notice being taken of it all then. So she put the little key in your music box, sir.

"Put the little key in your music box, sir," continued Tim. "It's all true, sir, for she went down upon her knees, sir, and confessed to it all, and how she had had pounds and pounds, and that you caught her that night in the dark, when she had gone to put back a half-crown or two that was marked; and she was afraid it was found out then; but it was a letter from the vicar which settled it all. And, oh! sir, if I had only known of all this, I'd never have asked you to speak up for Mrs. Ruggles to be pew-opener. Yes, sir, it was a letter from the vicar had done it all, telling her never to go near the church again, and giving her what we poor journeymen tailors call 'the bullet.'

"Oh, I was cut, sir, after all you had done for us, sir, and the customer you had been to me; for it never seemed like coming out to work a day here, sir; I was always at home, and treated like a friend; and what with the thoughts of that, and the kind way you had treated little Pine, and the cruel manner she had behaved in towards the poor little dead angel, I worked myself up, and I actually said and wished then that the vicar had not promised that he wouldn't prosecute her, for she deserved it then, sir, if ever a woman did. Yes, sir, I was worked up; and in my rage I seized the iron, sir, and she shrieked out, but though it was only cold, I thought it wouldn't be manly to hit her with that, so I put it down, and caught up the sleeve-board, and stood over her with it, quite furious, while she told all, and begged for mercy over and over again; and then, sir, I was that mad that I stamped about the room, and she was frightened of me, hard a woman as she was.

"Mind my eyes! mind my eyes!" she kept on crying, as I stood over her, and made her own to all her treachery; while at times, sir, I didn't know whether to be mad or to cry with shame, sir, to hear her telling all; and then to think of her black-heartedness after it was all found out—going to rob me, sir, and take even my poor wife's brooch. It was cruel—cruel—cruel.

"But, then," continued Tim, "I held up, sir, though I could have broken down a score of times; and I spurred myself on by thinking of the way in which she used to treat poor Pine, till, seeing me flourish the sleeve-board about in that mad way, sir, the wicked creature was frightened for her life, and, jumping up and giving me a push, she darted out of the room, and before I got over my surprise, sir, she was gone; and perhaps it was best, sir, or in my mad rage, sir, I might so far have forgotten myself as to have struck her, when, you know, sir, I should never afterwards have forgiven myself—never, so sure as my name is Tim Ruggles, sir, tailor. Gentlemen's own materials made up."

"It's very sad," said Mrs. Jared, for Tim had paused; "but of course after the fright is over she will come back."

"Never, ma'am, never," said Tim; "she has opened a gulf between us, ma'am, that there would be no bridging over. Authority for saying so. I'm now, ma'am, what I ought always to have been since my poor wife left me—a widower; and I mean to keep so. No, ma'am, I'm not sorry she's gone; for though a wonderful woman, ma'am—a most strong-minded

woman, ma'am—she was not happy in her ways; and since she has left me I've been thinking things over, and seeing them a little clearer than I used to see them, and I'm afraid I didn't do my duty by some one who is passed away and gone. But I'm sorry, sir and ma'am, and what more can I say, being only a weak man, and thinking that I had done all for the best; though I don't mind saying to you, sir, that what some one else said was quite right—Mrs. Ruggles did marry me. But it's all over now, sir; she has gone, and I didn't strike her, sir, for I never should have forgiven myself if I'd struck a woman."

"Well," said Jared, kindly, "and now suppose we say let all this be forgotten, and sit down."

"No, sir, not yet," said Tim—"not yet. I'm not done, sir. I've something else to tell you; but perhaps it would be best that Miss Patty did not stay, and you can tell her yourselves afterwards."

Patty rose and left the room.

"You see," said Tim, "I had a visit only yesterday from a decent-looking lady, who came with a little, quiet knock; and at first I thought she was making a mistake, and had come to the wrong room; but no, she knew me well enough, though I did not remember her pale, worn face for a minute, until I knew her all at once as Pine's mother, when, ma'am, I could have run away if I'd had a chance. It did seem so hard to tell her, when she came, almost in a threatening way like, to ask me for her child; and when I told her it was dead and gone, it was heartbreaking to see how she took on, and said I'd killed it at first, but the next moment she turned wild and strange, and said the child was not dead, but that I had joined with Mr. Richard Pellet to keep her little one from her. And then I was quite frightened, for she told me she was mad, and that she was Mrs. Richard Pellet, and that little Pine was her own dear child. And what with wondering whether it was true, and puzzling how it could be that my darling in a sort of way belonged to you too, I got muddled; but I told her all I could, and begged of her to listen; but the poor thing seemed quite frantic with her sorrow, and I had to let her go, believing me a cheat and a liar, and that I had been cruel to little Pine."

"But there," said Tim, after a pause, "I could only pity her, poor thing, and hope that Time would make all things come right, as I hope he will, sir; but he seems a terrible long while about it, and I'm afraid it won't be in my day—at least, I can't seem to see it."

Then Tim found out that he must go, and he hurried away as if not a moment were to be lost, satisfied now, he said, that he had set himself right; while Jared and his wife stood hand in hand, thoughtful and silent, the latter with tears in her eyes, reproaching herself for not seeing through the mystery sooner.

"For, oh, Jared!" she said, "if we had had the poor little thing here, we might have saved its life."

CHAPTER XLVI.—IN CHASE.

"FIVE o'clock," said Harry Clayton, as the clerk came in to lay a couple of letters upon the table of his employer's private office. "How long have I been waiting this time?"

"Better than an hour, sir," said the clerk.

"What time do you close?" inquired Harry.

"Five o'clock, sir," said the clerk. "He won't come here now."

"'Spose not," said Harry. "I'll run down to Norwood. Hardly like going without an invite, though, now. It won't seem like home," he muttered.

And then he looked at the door, as much surprised as the clerk, for there stood the figure of Ellen Herrissey.

"That's the lady he went out with," said the clerk, in an undertone.

"Has he not come back?" said Ellen, hoarsely. "Has not Mr. Richard Pellet returned?"

"No," said Harry, quietly. "I am waiting for him."

"Who are you?" said Ellen, abruptly.

"Who am I?" said Harry, smiling good-humouredly. "My name is Clayton."

"Her son!" exclaimed Ellen.

"The late Mrs. Clayton's son, if that is what you mean, and Mr. Pellet is my stepfather."

"I thought so," exclaimed Ellen. "And where is she?"

"In heaven, I trust," said Harry, reverently.

"Dead!—dead!" exclaimed Ellen; "and did he kill her, as he killed me, to marry some one else?"

"Hush!" said Harry. "Perhaps you had better go," he said to the clerk, who was feasting open-mouthed upon the gossip banquet before him, but immediately left the room.

"Where is he now?" said Ellen, eagerly.

"At Norwood, I expect," said Harry; "but may I ask who you are?"

"Me—me!" she exclaimed, passionately; "I am the woman who has been his slave through life; the woman he drove mad, and then kept hidden away that he might marry money. But I am not mad now—only sometimes. And now—now he has robbed me of my child—his child—no, no, my child, my own darling; and they try to cheat me; they say it is dead. But no, it could not die; it is well and happy. And," she continued, in an undertone, "I have half maddened him. I was here this morning, and told him I would have my little one. I would not leave him, but he contrived to evade me."

Then, catching Harry's wrist, she whispered a few words in his ear, which made him turn pale with horror.

"Nonsense! No, no, not so bad as that," he said, hoarsely.

"Yes, yes; I fear it is. Take me with you now—at once."

Harry stood for a moment thinking, and half confused—at times, too, doubting the sanity of his companion; but, evidently having formed his plans, he said hurriedly, "Come, then!" and in a few minutes they had secured a cab, and were rattling over London Bridge.

A train due in five minutes, but it seemed to them five hours before it came. Off at last, though; and very soon after leaving the station their footsteps were crunching over the gravel sweep that led to the front door of Richard Pellet's place; when, as soon almost as they reached the porch, the door flew open, and a burst of warm light greeted them,

their approach having been heralded by a bell from the lodge.

"My father—Mr. Pellet—in?" said Harry to one of the gentlemen in drab and coach lace.

"Not been gone out ten minutes, sir."



"Do you know where to?" said Harry.

The gentleman in coach lace looked at his fellow, and then back at Harry, to answer—

"Station, sir; carriage not come back yet. Came 'ome and had early dinner, and ordered carriage at five."

"No idea where he has gone?" said Harry, anxiously.

The gentleman in coach lace looked at his fellow once more before answering, while Ellen Herrissey whispered to Harry, as she tightly clutched his arm—

"Ask him again—again!"

But there was no need.

"Paris, I think, sir," said the man. "I shouldn't tell any one, sir; but it can't be wrong to tell you. Glad to see you back, sir. Like dinner dreckly?"

"No, no," said Harry, hesitating. "Did—did you notice anything particular? But what makes you say Paris?"

"Because he told me to look what time trains run from London Bridge to Newhaven, sir; and what time the Dieppe boat started. His hand shook so, sir, he could not find out for himself."

"Was he ill? Did you see anything else particular in him?" said Harry, anxiously.

"Didn't seem self at all, sir; and did nothing hardly at dinner but drink wine, sir."

"There, there!" whispered Ellen, "I told you so. He is wild, and you must stop him, or he will—"

Harry shuddered, and turned away, to snatch his portemonnaie from his pocket, and count its contents.

"You had better stay here," he said.

"No, no!" exclaimed Ellen, "I must go with you. I want my—I want to be with you. If anything were to happen—if he committed any rash act—

I should feel that his blood was upon my head. Come," she said, eagerly, and with a strange, wild glare in her eyes—"come, there is no time to lose. I want my—I want to be on the way."

By consulting Bradshaw, Harry found that they might reach Newhaven before the boat started, perhaps catch the very train by which Richard Pellet travelled; though the probability was that they would find him to have an hour's start of them, but by a slow train—that is, if he had gone at all, which Harry was sometimes disposed to doubt. But then he had taken luggage, and had written a direction, so the man said; and in corroboration he brought a blotting pad and part of a book of adhesive luggage labels, one of which was written upon, but, perhaps from want of legibility, smeared hastily over. But there, plain enough to read, was the address, "R. Pellet, Hotel Laroche, R—."

That was all. Where would "R" be? Some Rue in Paris, Harry thought, when his eyes fell upon the blotting pad, one that had hardly been used, but upon which, in reverse, he could now make out the same address left by another label that had been blotted upon it. "R. Pellet" was perfectly plain, and then with a little puzzling he made out the rest—"Hotel Laroche, Rouen."

"Can we have the brougham?" said Harry.

For he was now satisfied.

"D'reckly, sir," said the man.

But "d'reckly" proved to be a full half-hour afterwards, when, just as Harry was about to set out on foot for the station, the brougham came round to the door, and they stepped in.

"Station—quick!" said Harry.

The man drove quickly, but they were only in time



to see one train glide away through the darkness, leaving them waiting impatiently for the next.

Fortunately for the travellers the trains succeeded each other very quickly, and, getting out at London Bridge, they just had time to cross over and reach

the express as the last bell rang, hurrying into a carriage, and giving vent to a sigh of relief as they felt it glide away into the outer darkness.

Gazing out of the window at the lamps, here and there dimly seen through the fog that hung over them, Ellen Herrissey sat without speaking a word. Harry had ventured one or two remarks, but she had only made an impatient gesture with her hand, and out of respect for her anxiety he remained silent, and sat pondering over the probable termination of his expedition. It had been so hurried and excited an affair that he had not before had time to think calmly; neither was a rapid express train upon the Brighton railway a desirable place for quiet meditation.

However, as they rushed along he tried to link together the incidents that had led to what now seemed like a wild and foolish chase. What would his stepfather say to him for hunting him in this fashion, and for bringing with him this woman? But, then, her dark suspicion that he was half mad with rage, and meditated self-destruction, joined to the accounts he had heard at his own house of his strange, unsettled state, which seemed to tend to the same conclusion, satisfied him upon the whole that he had done right in coming. It was evident that she spoke the truth, and was connected with his stepfather in some way, from the clerk having pointed her out as the lady with whom his employer had gone out that morning.

"It must be right," muttered Harry.

And then his thoughts strayed away for a while to Duplex-street and the previous evening; then to the future.

Harry's train of thought was interrupted by a moan from his companion, who seemed to be in deep distress; but, thinking it better not to intrude, he leaned back in his place, and the rest of the journey was performed in silence.

Newhaven at last, with the keen breeze blowing off the sea. Night, black as Erebus; and the glimmering lamps looking down upon half-thawed snow lying here and there in patches. No fog here, every wreath of vapour being chased away by the brisk breeze; but an utterly desolate aspect of misery everywhere, which made the warm glow of the great, new-looking hotel-rooms pleasant by contrast.

"Boat, sir? half an hour, sir. Just time for refreshments, sir. Stout, grey gentleman, sir, by last train? Not here, sir. Yes, sir, quite sure; must have known if one had come; perhaps gone to the little hotel in the town. Time to go and get back before the boat starts? Should think not, sir; leastwise, shouldn't like to try."

So said the waiter; and Harry and Ellen Herrissey started out into the dark night, to search waiting-room, wharf, and steamer, deck and cabin, for him of whom they were in quest.

CHAPTER XLVII.—THE END OF A JOURNEY.

"PERHAPS, after all, he has not come," said Harry to his silent companion, for no word left her lips; she only restlessly led him from place to place, pressing his arm with her hand when she wished him to speak to porter or guard. Once he

heard her mutter, and caught a few words—"to escape and hide—taken her there," but she made no reply to his remark,

They had searched the waiting-rooms of the station and hotel, paced up and down the wharf, boarded the steamer, and examined every labelled berth; but there was no sign of either Richard Pellet or his luggage. Then they returned to the pier, and watched in the direction that would be taken by any one coming from the little hotel in the town, till a blinding squall of wind-borne snow would have made Harry lead his companion into shelter; but she seemed not to pay the slightest heed to the weather, as she gazed incessantly here and there to catch a glimpse of the missing man.

The mooring cables creaked and groaned as the steamer rose and fell upon the swell in the little harbour, the water rushing fiercely past, black and angry, save where it broke and glistened now and again upon the bows of a boat or upon the piles and piers around; while fitfully fell the snow in great soft pats, whirled here and there, each flake darting from its fellow when they passed the lamps, which flickered and danced as the squalls penetrated every nook and cranny. Now the platform and pier would be white; but in a few moments a black patch would break out here, another there, growing rapidly larger, till once more all would be a wet, slippery, blackened sheet, upon whose surface the lamps' rays flickered and blinked.

A bitter night—cold, dark, and dreary. The men about clad in oilskin wrappers, which glistened with the wet that streamed down them as the snow melted. Nearly every one carried a lantern, to swing about as a signal to guide his steps amongst the railway trucks. Dark clouds floating by, to halt now and then, and send skimming down what seemed a winding-sheet of snow. Then would come a moaning gust of wind, sweeping the heavier clouds away, to leave the heavens but little lighter. The few passengers bound for Dieppe hurried across the pier, and made the best of their way on board to secure their berths, perhaps with no very pleasant anticipations of the coming night; and, saving for here and there a railway official with a lantern, scarcely a soul was to be seen as Harry and his companion still kept watch in the direction of the town.

The time had nearly expired, so nearly that if Richard Pellet took his departure by that steamer he must be on board within the next five minutes, while, upon once more going on board and questioning the steward respecting the advent of a short, stout, grey gentleman, that functionary, evidently put somewhat out of temper by the weather and the poor array of passengers, incontinently cursed the stout passenger, and turned his back upon the querists, who made their way over the slippery deck, across the gangway, and once more began to pace up and down upon the landing stage.

If Richard Pellet had come down, which Harry very much doubted, he must, as the waiter had suggested, have gone into the town, and Harry now repented that he had not at once hurried on there and made inquiries; for, though he kept scouting the idea as absurd, and telling himself that his step-

father had some other reason for coming down here, his imagination was full of horrors suggested by his memory of destroyed directions and cards, and of men who had sought hotels in remote places to do some deed which should only produce an inquest on the body of a man unknown—unrecognized—unreclaimed—so that the memory of the horror might soon pass away, and relatives only know that one of their family was missing.

His fears must though, he told himself, be groundless; for Richard Pellet, wealthy, prosperous, was not the man to make an end of his life. But then he might not, after all, be prosperous—his affairs might be in a hopeless state of confusion; and now this strange connection with the woman at his side might have urged him to flight, or the commission of the crime at which she had hinted. But might not the woman be deceiving him?

A glance, though, at the anxious, pallid face at his side, showed him plainly enough that even if she believed not the words she had uttered, she was moved by strong impulse to overtake his stepfather; and, after all, what she had whispered might be true.

At last he determined to speak—to question her; but it was in vain, for he could get no answer. In fact, Ellen Herrissey had, in her eagerness to overtake the man whom she believed to have her child, forgotten the ruse that she had used to set Harry in search of his stepfather. It was the half-insane prompting of her fevered brain, but as soon as her object was effected entirely forgotten—crushed out of her memory, as it were, by the intense desire to overtake him. Richard Pellet and her child: there seemed room for nothing else in her thoughts; and once only had she spoken to Harry during the last quarter of an hour of their search, and then only to inquire in a husky voice whether there was any other boat, and when answered in the negative, she had relapsed into her former silence.

The night darker than ever, a star now and then appearing, but only to be directly blotted out by some dense cloud; whenever a light patch of sky was visible low down on the horizon, the interlacing rigging and masts of the few vessels about could be seen rocking to and fro, while the steamer lights rose and fell in a way that betokened rough weather in the Channel. In the intervals of the squalls, too, would be heard the long, low roar of the sea breaking upon the beach below the chalk cliffs that towered away to the west, or round by the sandy bay by Seaford. Waves rose, too, and washed with a heavy dash against the pier at the harbour entrance; and more than once Harry had heard it hinted that the steamer would not put to sea in such weather.

But the hints were from those ill-informed—the steamer was bound for Dieppe that night; and as Harry and his companion stood by the gangway, looking down upon the vessel's deck, the paddles began to revolve, and Harry thought she had started, and that he had come, after all, on an errand of folly—such an one as a little forethought would have stayed him from attempting. But the boat was not yet off; the movement had only been to ease the strain upon the cables stretched on to

the landing-place; for, as if eager to set off, the vessel had been tugging at them until one threatened to part.

Another squall and a fall of snow, during which the last bell rang, and a man shouted to Harry to know if he were going on board.

"No," he answered, but hesitatingly, as if it were possible that he whom they sought might after all be in the steamer.

But it was too late now to search, for two men seized the gangway to draw it back as the signal was given to go on, the wheels creaked, the first beat of the paddle was heard, when the figure of a man bearing a valise was seen to hurry down towards the boat.

What followed seemed to occupy but a moment or two, and, anxious as he was, Harry felt himself helpless to do more than look on. For, as he first caught sight of and recognized the figure, in spite of its wrappings, he felt himself thrust back, and Ellen darted forward, half shrieking—

"My child! where is she?"

Richard Pellet stopped, turned as if to hurry back, but the next moment he dropped the valise, and ran a few steps forward, along the edge of the landing-stage, as if to leap the distance between himself and the steamer as she came by. Then he turned, in time to see a woman wrest herself from a man who had tried to stay her; then she was upon him, crying, as she grasped at his breast—

"Give me my child!"

The next instant there was a shout, a shriek, and Richard Pellet had stepped backward, to fall from the wharf in front of one of the paddle-boxes, where Ellen Herrissey would have followed, but for one of the men, who dragged her away.

And what saw those who had rushed to the edge of the wharf, holding down lanterns, and swinging them to and fro, while others flung ropes, or rushed to where boats were moored? The black, gliding hull of the steamer, the turbulent water, churned into a white foam by the beating paddles, and a momentary glimpse of a grey head and two raised hands as they were sucked into the stream, and beaten beneath the paddles, which crashed down heavily upon the drowning man's head, before there was a clank, clanking noise in the engine-room, and the huge wheels ceased to revolve.

Then, as the white foam was swept away, and the steamer lay-to, the life-buoy was thrown over, men were seen with lanterns in boats rising and falling upon the black waters, which reflected the gleam of the light; but in spite of searchings here and there, backwards and forwards, they showed no one clinging to the life-buoy hauled into one of the boats, no grey head or appealing hands at the summit of a little wave or in its hollow. Black water only everywhere, save when it curled back in a creamy foam from shore or pile.

Then once more the order, "Go on ahead," the "clink, clank, clank" in the engine-room, where there was a warm red glow from furnace doors, and the hot smell of oil and steam, a loud hiss or two, the huge cylinders beginning to swing to and fro, the pistons to rise and fall with their cranks, the black water churning again into white foam, the

stern lights of the steamer rising and falling higher and lower as she passed out of the harbour mouth; and then slowly, one by one, the boats returned to their moorings, and those who had manned them to the landing-stage.

"Name on portmanter, R. Pellet," said one man in wet oilskins, holding down his lantern, and examining the little black valise as it lay upon the pier now covered with snowflakes. "Werry shocking, but I don't see as we could have saved him, or done more than we did."

"Get his body to-morrow, d'yer think?" said a bystander with a short pipe, to a fishy-looking man in a blue Jersey and a sou'wester.

"May be yes, may be no," said the one addressed; "but most like no, for he'll be carried out to sea, safe as wheat."

Then there was a buzz of voices, and more waving of lanterns, as fresh faces appeared on the scene.

"Here! for God's sake, help!" exclaimed Harry Clayton, sick himself almost unto death, "this lady has fainted."

CHAPTER XLVIII.—AT HIGHGATE.

IT was some time after Richard Pellet's death, and the exciting scenes attendant upon it, before Harry could make up his mind to seek out the Pellet family in the new home to which they had removed on the sudden accession of wealth consequent on his step-father's death. For he now stood in very different relations to them as regarded pecuniary matters, and his pride drove him to accumulate honours, if not wealth, before he again visited them to become once more a suitor for Patty's hand.

His first visit to the house at Highgate was certainly not a success, for Jared and Patty were from home, and Mrs. Pellet informed him of their absence in a very formal and constrained manner.

On the next day, however, he was more successful, and his earnestness and satisfactory explanation of his long silence soon won upon Jared; and though at first Mrs. Jared was stern and uncompromising, Harry was too much for her in his downright honest declaration.

"Don't be hard upon me, Mrs. Pellet—don't send me away; for, indeed, I love her very dearly."

This was too much for Mrs. Jared, and the consequence was that he was allowed to plead his own cause with Patty.

His pleading seemed to have a satisfactory result; for the end of it was that he stayed and dined with them, and saw Jared, ready to go off to the vicar's, stay to have a string tucked in here and a brushing there, while, in the exertion of making the most of himself, he burst the pearl button off his wristband. And now Patty was called into requisition to sew it on once more; and I vow and declare the fresh pearl button which she held between her rosy lips while she made a knot at the end of her thread was not so bright and pure-looking as the maiden's little regular teeth, and let those contradict it who can.

Who would not have been Jared, and had that soft, down-bloomed cheek laid against his wrist? Why, if it had been any other wrist, it must have beat and throbbed at a redoubled rate. Or who

would not have been the thread which Patty bit in two when the button had been duly stabbed in all its eyes, and was firmly secured? Why, that thread must have been conscious, and enjoyed it, or it never would have held out so long instead of being bitten through at first.

Jared gone, leaving Harry Clayton in his fold, amongst the lambs of his flock. Very reprehensible, no doubt, but not worse than Mrs. Jared's behaviour; for, though left at home as guardian, she either turned wilfully blind, or else the children did take an extra amount of minding and attention, so as to take her into other parts of the house.

Strange proceedings there were that afternoon. Why could not the visitor allow Patty to busily ply her needle, instead of insisting upon holding one hand in his? Why, too, must he want to help to prepare the tea, and keep poor Patty in a state of nervous flutter as to her little heart? But then, at a certain stage in their existence, people do make themselves so truly absurd, or rather are, as Richard Pellet used to say, such fools; and then, as an excuse for their idleness and waste of precious life-time, persist in laying the blame upon nature.

Yes, Harry must make the toast, and fill up the greater part of available space by the fire, manifesting not the slightest intention of going away so long as he could feast his eyes upon Patty. There was no one there but a couple of small Pellets—little round Pellets—who sat and looked on very solemnly, not yet knowing what to make of the stranger who had invaded the premises. Mrs. Pellet was busy elsewhere until such time as she should be called, so Harry made the toast, burning it often, or leaving white patches where it should have been brown, while Patty applied the butter as it was needed.

They were as homely as ever at Highgate, in spite of the plenty around; for Mrs. Jared said that she could never settle to the ways adopted by some people, even if she had a million a week. And so she was busy away in the store-room, looking over a regiment of pots of jam, which had mutinously displayed mould. There was no one looking on them in the room but the little, round-eyed, speechless Pellets, when Harry asked again for—no he did not: he took one.

Well, Adam and Eve were to blame, for setting the example. After a few seconds, Patty's face was drawn down to a level with Harry's, from which position she rose with tingling ears, because he had called her his "own, own darling."

Mrs. Pellet did not hear it, for she did not come back for five minutes more, when the lamp was lit; and, as to faces looking red, well, go and toast at a ruddy fire for ten minutes yourself, and then see if you have not borrowed some of the fire's hue.

Jared was only just in time for tea, and he apologized heartily for being so long away, excuses which Harry was kind enough to receive most graciously, and then what an evening was spent!

Musical, of course, they were all the evening, and to Patty the notes now were those of love. There was love everywhere, looking down from the sparkling bright sky, from the pale moon; and, most of all, in her pure, young, innocent heart, now drinking deeply of the draught for which it had thirsted.

CHAPTER XLIX.—IN THE REFLECTOR.

JARED PELLET used to declare, with a grim smile, that he thought he was more happy as a poor man in Duplex-street than he was now that he had inherited his brother's property—he said that he thought so—he was not sure, though; he really found the money almost a trouble to him. In fact, it would have been a burden to him, he said, if he had not lightened it by arranging for Harry Clayton to become possessed of the amount brought by his mother into Richard Pellet's business. Jared complained that he had so little time now for dreaming over his old organ, sooner than part from which he would almost have given up the worldly goods now in his possession. There was always something to be done; some one to see, or some one to see him; while the amount of letters soliciting charitable bequests, and lauding his late brother's generosity, and the number of secretaries who called upon him, made totals that would almost stagger belief. And perhaps this next fact that I chronicle will hardly be credited. Mrs. Jared had actually had a good long cry when the time came for leaving the old house in Duplex-street, with its pinched and bare rooms, but where she said she had spent so many, many happy hours, gone never to return. And wonderful was the collection of odds and ends brought away, to be deposited in their wealthy new home; one and all articles that it was declared impossible to leave behind. One was Jared's glue-pot, which showed its malignant disposition to the very last, and, after being wrapped up carefully in paper, proved to have a quantity of nasty, dirty, sticky water in its internal regions, which ran out all over a new suit of clothes, made and finished off in the last style of fashion by Tim Ruggles, but now put carefully away until the moving was over.

Patty, too, must be in consternation because the old tin-kettle of a piano had to be left behind. What did she know about instruments of seven octaves from Broadwood, Brinsmead, and Erard? They could not make her feel that she was to desert old friends. How many boxes of strange pieces of wood and fragments of this and that were packed up under the name of playthings, it is hard to say.

I have before mentioned one of Mrs. Jared's weaknesses—perhaps this may not come under the same category; but during the arrangements, what time the house in Duplex-street was turned what she called inside out, and the question was in full discussion as to what was to be taken and what left, the lady of the house suddenly exclaimed, in answer to an expostulation—

"What! leave that rolling pin and pasteboard! No, not if I know it! I've had them twenty years, and—"

The remainder of the speech was inaudible, from Mrs. Jared's head suddenly disappearing in the depths of a big box, where she was rolling the pie and pudding preparers in the folds of a table cloth for safety.

"Well, dear," said Jared, "is there anything else that you would like to take?"

"Yes, that there is," said his wife, taking down a bunch of sweet herbs from a hook in the kitchen

ceiling, and placing it beside the swaddled rolling pin. "Yes, the things were hard enough to get together, and really I cannot see a single thing I want to leave behind."

After that night in the church, Jared somehow took a dislike to the reflector, even shuddering when he gazed in its depths, for as to giving up the right of conducting the service for a Sunday at St. Runwald's, that was out of the question; and it was only occasionally, as a personal favour to Mr. Gray or Mr. Timson, that a stranger was allowed to try the instrument. But that reflector Jared took down himself from over the keyboard of the organ, and old Purkis bore it into the damp vestry, where, in course of time, its reflective powers became almost nil.

But though Jared Pellet no longer possessed a reflector, into which he could gaze and dream, and picture scenes of the past and future, yet I have a mirror of the mind, upon which I have just breathed before polishing it, as I sit late on this bitter wintry night, as Purkis sat of old in the dim shades of the gloomy old church, listening to the inspiring music of the grand old organ, thundering in peals, wailing in sighs, or pouring forth jubilant melody. Far above me in the distance, from behind a curtain hung from a brass rod, rises a faint glare, as from a feeble light, above which start, like golden pillars dimly seen when the northern lights flush the wintry sky, the mighty pipes whose summits are in the deep obscurity which clouds the open roof of the edifice.

And in my mirror what is there first, an indelible picture? No; for it fades to give place to others, as I gaze at thy patient, enduring face, old Jared, subdued, timid, but God knows how loving, dreaming over music-book and keyboard by the light of that one feeble candle, which seems to shed a halo round thy quaint old head. A simple picture, and, as it were, but the drawing of the curtain suspended from the brass rod.

Now the interior of the old church by day, with Jared at the organ. A bright spring morning, and Jared in the very unfashionable morning costume of a glossy black dress coat and trousers, white waistcoat, and patent leather boots, his grisly hair having a peculiar knotted appearance; and did any mirror reflect odours, most surely there would be a smell of curling tongs and singeing. There is a camellia, too, in his button-hole, and he has just hurried up and split a pair of white kid gloves in dragging them on. Crash!—that's the drawing of the curtain, so that he can screw himself round, and look down into the church, now that he has placed a music book upon the stand of the opened organ. The sun streams through the tinted windows in golden and ruddy glories, piercing the sombre twilight of the church with rays whereon dance myriad motes of dust—dust perhaps mingled with that of the generations of the past.

Jared is looking anxiously towards the chancel; and now comes a strange rushing sound, and a dull "creak, creak," and the huge instrument seems to shudder. But that is only Ichabod, grown tall and out of leathers, toiling away at the long handle of the bellows, till the little weight tells that

the wind-chest is full. And now here comes the party Jared left in the vestry, for there is a buzz of excitement in the church, and heads are craning, while Tim Ruggles is so excited that he stands up on the cushions of his pew, so as to have a better view of what is going on. Here they come! No, they don't. That's Purkis, the beadle, in full uniform, plump, ruddy, glistening with moisture that he is too dignified to remove, as he rolls solemnly down the nave towards the door, waving the people back with his cane. Smile? Not he. Beadles don't smile in public life, only when out of uniform; and as to using a handkerchief, beadles seldom bend to that, unless compelled by such a flesh-quake or sneeze as now shakes Purkis's frame, caused by that sooty dust, and not the damp. But now they do come, Patty—young, blushing, blooming Patty—leaning upon the arm of Harry Clayton, whose exulting soul seems too big for his manly body; Timson next, rounder than ever, with the prettiest bridesmaid on his arm; more bridesmaids—more, more—ah! it's all a bright confusion that seems dancing together in the mirror, the only distinct figures of which are Mr. Gray, who has doffed his surplice and now joined the party, and Mrs. Purkis, crying and then laughing, but turning solemn the next moment, as becomes the new pew-opener of St. Runwald's. Peal up the "Wedding March," old Jared, for never did its notes pour forth to welcome a more loving couple. But Jared can't play—not he. He has blundered several chords, though no one is a bit the wiser. He would break down if he had not known the piece by heart so many years. There is dew all over Jared's spectacles, and they won't be seen through, while a tear has trickled down, gathering strength from affluents as it proceeds, until it hangs upon the tip of Jared's nose, to go plash down at last upon G natural of the finger-board; and there are more weak tears stealing down from behind his spectacles to moisten his cheeks. It might be perspiration, but it is not; though he is laughing, crying, and playing mechanically at one and the same time, for he surely never played worse and in a more soulless manner in his life. But there, he always was weak and odd, and unbusiness-like, and "some people are such fools!" It can hardly be expected that at such a time he should be exact in his fingering, but his actions are so odd that one would say, "Bring a strait waistcoat," only he is in one already, which crackles and snaps at every motion. And now comes a dismal groan, due to the excitement of the time; for—probably for only the second time in his life, being, in spite of his vagaries, when at work a most exemplary blower—Ichabod has let the wind out of the organ. But it does not matter, for the wedding party is already in the porch, and being waited upon by a deputation from the Campanological Brethren in the shape of Beaky Jem of the tenor, who grins and rubs his Roman nostrum as he growls out something about the bells. Timson is at him, though, fighting hard to get a hand into his pocket, and fighting just as hard to get it out with what must have been a satisfactory answer, for St. Runwald's peal asserted itself that day far above the roar of the streets, ringing out merrily in thousands of changes, stimulated by the "sight o' beer there

was in that belfry, sewerly," but always to the same tune—joy.

Gone—all gone; the bells seem still ringing in my ears; but no, the sounds are those of the old organ, and for a moment my mirror is blank, till I see a tall, pale, bent woman, listening patiently with clasped hands to a never-wearying tale, told her by a strange, wrinkled little man, who sits and pretends to smoke, and pokes at and arranges the little scrubby trifle of hair by his temples with the stem of his pipe—a tale of a little child whose gentle spirit fled while he slept, holding her to his quaint but loving breast. How many times has Tim Ruggles told of little Pine it were hard to say, but neither he nor his listener ever tire; and perhaps it is due to their hands that flowers bloom so sweetly upon the little grave. The fount of tears might have been dry before now; but no, there is always one ready to fall to the child's memory in the corner set apart for Ellen Herrissey in Jared's house. A strange, pale, quiet woman, who rarely speaks, rarely smiles, save when Patty enters with a dimple-faced baby, and sits and lets the pale, silent woman kneel by her side, and gaze with a hungering love at the little one, which coos and laughs in her face.

Jared again—the man who was puzzled years before by a letter in French from a small Norman town, saying that the writer had been surprised not to see Monsieur Pellet after his letter appointing an interview, but that arrangements could be made for the reception of one lady-boarder, and then giving the terms upon which she could be accommodated. Jared could not at first understand this, but he soon came to the right conclusion—that it had been intended for his brother, who must have been on his way to keep the appointment when that stern voice cried "Stay!"

Jared again in the mirror, in his old place, with two fresh cherubs perched there, one on either side; fresh coloured, bright-eyed, restless cherubs, upon which our bloated old friends of the organ look jealously down. And there sits Jared pretending to practise, but a very slave to every whim and caprice of these little household gods. Wonderful now are the effects and variations made upon the music before the old organist in these his grandfather days; pedals are pressed down, stops are pulled out, now pushed in, then bass or treble discords are played at unexpected times by fat little pudgy hands, while, in the midst of a composition of some favourite old master, the organ once more gives forth a doleful dying wail, for the wind is out, through Ichabod Gunniss playing peep-bo between the curtains with one of the cherubs, and having miscalculated the lasting properties of a well-pumped full chest of wind. But old Jared only smiles, and looks the perfection of earthly happiness.

Rub the glass: there's Jared Pellet as great a man in the City as was his brother, and perhaps a happier, as the head of the great firm of Pellet and Co., into which establishment, in Austin Friars, he slinks every other day, because his son-in-law wishes it; though Jared is always very nervous, and fancies that the head clerk looks down upon him, because he comes up every Sunday from Highgate to play the organ at St. Runwald's, and afterwards eat his modest

chop in Fleet-street's "Cock," where the quaint old-fashioned ways seem to suit him. And there, too, is Patty: comely, matronly Patty, her mother's own child, as Harry tells us, when he finds that the quiver slung at his back grows heavier year by year, though, as he says, what does it matter, when there's plenty for them?

Another breathe, and the scenes come quickly across the face of the mirror, as the damp breath passes away; scenes of grey old men smoking long pipes, and playing cribbage or whist, at Harry's place at Norwood or Jared's home at Highgate; of life's downward course made smoother for many by the wealth of Richard Pellet; of old Timson standing before Jared Pellet, with his hands beneath his coat tails, and a frown upon his brow, though there is an odd twinkle in his eye as he says, "There's a strange deficiency in the poor-boxes, Mr. Pellet, sir, and times are very hard," and Jared laughs; and though the vicar laughs too, and says, "Be quiet, Tim!" he makes a point of going with the churchwarden to empty the boxes upon the very next day, to find the deficiency amply made up.

But one more breathe at the bright surface, but one more rub at the mirror; and now I hardly dare look—nay, I need not look, for, dreaming no more, I gaze up from my seat at the reality, at the faint glow from behind the curtain, and I listen to the softened tones of the old organ quivering in the air as they float round and round the darkened church. The music is sweet, but sad, and the strains thrill me in a strange manner, as they sound funereal, dirge-like, and I fancy that it is not the touch of Jared. The hour is late, the streets are getting hushed, and the solemnity of the place seems oppressive, aided as it is in its influence on the senses by the wailing strains that seem to sob through the air.

Silence for awhile, and the sense of oppression grows more heavy; but now once more the swelling, softened tones of the grand old instrument fall upon the ear—strains wild and extemporized—music that seems almost palpable as it comes current-like through nave, aisle, and chancel. Sad music, solemn strains, and again a silence oppressive as the former, when I close my eyes, not daring to gaze within my mirror, lest it should show me the resting-place of Jared in some city of the dead.

A strange thrill, but gone on the instant—only the chiming of the old clock, then the hour told off slowly and clumsily, every blow of the hammer upon the bell vibrating through the church. Then the mutilated Old Hundredth Psalm hammered out upon the chimes, and then again silence till the air has ceased to vibrate with the brazen clangour.

The organ again, in a sweet strain from some flute-like stop, and I rise to listen, gazing intently the while upon the soft glow shed upon the organ pipes, where it seems as if the dawning of some bright day was heralded, and a dazzling orb of light about to rise. But no! the rising is that of a glorious crescendo—higher—higher—higher—till in divinest strains the glorious fugue culminates in a mighty burst, poured forth by the instrument's full power, but only to die away in distant mutterings, as of thunder, from the pedal pipes; for the practice is at an end.

The dread which troubled me has passed away, and I am again with that which is of the earth—earthy, for that was Jared's touch; that was the old organist, fettered by no ten minute edicts of old tea-dealing Timson, throwing his whole soul into some wondrous chorus, and, ere the last peal of muttering thunder has died away, the light is shining upon the bent grey head of my old friend.

THE END.

Scalped.

"SAY, Fred, are you tired?"

"I believe you, my boy, and cooked too. Let's look out for a good place for a rest and a pipe."

These remarks were uttered by a couple of frank-looking, sun-browned young Englishmen of twenty-two and twenty-three, who were on the tramp across country, towards the diggings in the Nevada territory, in the hope of making their fortunes. They, like many another impatient lad in the old country, had grown weary of the slow drudgery and gradual rise of London life, and had rushed off westward, in spite of the remonstrances of their respective families, under the delusion that a few weeks would see them the lucky possessors of golden nuggets enough to set them up in life.

The one addressed as Fred was a fair-haired, broad-shouldered Saxon of six feet high, with grey eyes and tanned complexion, and clad in a loose rough tunic, trousers tucked into his boots, and a broad-brimmed hat. In his belt were stuck a bowie-knife and a revolver, while he carried a double-barrelled shot gun. Both young men had canvas bags slung on their backs, containing the miscellaneous necessities of camping-out existence. Harry Leigh, the first speaker, was somewhat shorter and darker than his friend, with curly brown hair and short beard to match. His dress was the same as the other's, save that a falling collar to his tunic, showing a bare throat, gave him a more picturesque and careless appearance. They had been travelling on foot for some days, living on the small game that fell to their guns, and sleeping, with the starlit sky over their heads, by a fire easily made of the dry wood, and the shrivelled, scorched growth under their feet, which had in exposed places been made dry enough to burn by the excessive heat.

"What's that ahead there, in the clearing among those trees?" said Fred Morton, after five minutes more of silent tramping. "Looks like a building of some kind."

The erection he indicated turned out, on a nearer approach, to be an empty, and, to all appearance, long-deserted log hut; for the interior was grass-grown, and the walls in a very dilapidated condition.

"The very place for us," said Fred; "it's cool and pleasant."

And he flung himself down on the grassy floor, an example which was followed by his friend, when they both smoked away for some time in silence.

"Fred," said Harry, presently, "I wonder whether it's all gammon that one has read about the Indians. Are they really very decent chaps, or is it true that 'Injuns is pison, wherever met?'"

"We shall see for ourselves soon enough, I expect," was the reply. "But look here, what's this in the grass? By jingo! it's a rusty old tomahawk."

He dragged forth from where it had lain, probably for years, what had been a formidable weapon; and a careful inspection of the surrounding floor revealed a bowie-knife, and some other implement of which they could not guess the use. These discoveries led them to examine all the place, and they now found, what had before remained unnoticed, that the walls of the hut were riddled with bullets, some evidently fired from a close range, by the way in they had penetrated.

"There's been a fight here, some time or other," said Fred. "I wonder we don't find—hallo! why, here *are* some bones. Here, come along, and let's get out of the beastly hole! Ugh! it gives me the shivers."

Leigh followed him with alacrity, and they were soon proceeding on their way northward, leaving the plains behind them, as the country grew more hilly.

They were both silent—the circumstance of the ruined, deserted hut having had a depressing effect on their minds, not easily shaken off. What desperate conflicts had taken place there—what gallant defenders of their primitive home overpowered by numbers of murderous savages, to be as completely obliterated from the face of the earth as if they had not existed?—nothing but the ruins of their habitation and the clearing among the pine trees to show that human beings had ever been there.

The evening was sultry and oppressive, and the sun was only just on the verge of the horizon, when the young men, thoroughly tired out, threw down their things in a little open space on the outskirts of a wood, determining to make up the fire, early though it was, and stop there for the night.

A small, clear stream ran by the chosen resting-place, to fall into a little lake half a mile farther; and, using their hats as drinking vessels, the travellers refreshed themselves with a hearty draught of the cool beverage, so welcome after a long, hot, dusty tramp, and then proceeded to collect some fallen branches and dried grass and leafage, which were soon piled together and kindled. As the smoke began to curl upwards, Fred was beginning—

"And now for supper. I'm as hungry as—"

A long, piercing, but distant cry for help made them both start to their feet, and regard each other with startled faces; as it came again, by a simultaneous impulse they snatched up their guns, and darted off at the top of their speed in the direction whence the cry proceeded, which was nearly the same as that in which they had come. Though listening intently, they heard nothing further; but neither doubted that they were taking the right course, and a few minutes proved that they were not mistaken. As, panting and out of breath, they ascended a rising ground, it was to see at the bottom of the slope a half-naked savage stooping, scalping-knife in hand, over a prostrate figure. He looked up, to see Fred in the act of taking aim at his heart, when suddenly starting upright, with a yell of triumph, he held aloft the bloody scalp of his victim. Fred fired, but his bullet merely grazed the shoulder of the Indian, who bounded away with panther-like

activity, his long black hair streaming behind him, while none of the shots sent after him took effect. In a short space of time he was out of sight, and Harry Leigh ground his teeth with vexation at his escape.

The next minute they were kneeling beside the prostrate man, whom they found to be quite dead, his life-blood soaking into the ground.

Fred shuddered as he rose again, and turned his eyes away.

"Too late, poor wretch! Come, Hal—you can do him no good now."

"Hadn't I better try and find out who he is?" said Leigh, proceeding to feel in the dead man's pockets, but without finding a scrap of a letter, pocket-book, or anything which might afford a clue to his identity. He got up presently, and approached his friend. "I can't find out the poor devil's name. Seems, like us, to have been on his way to the diggings. Hallo, old fellow, how white you look! Why, you're as bad as a woman, Fred—pon my word you are. Have a little brandy."

But the brandy had been left behind by the fire; and the young man endeavoured to shake off the feeling of faintness that had come over him, and helped his friend in contriving a slight burial as well as they could for the unfortunate traveller.

As they took their way back to their fire, guided by the smoke they could see ascending, Leigh spoke—

"Fred, if I had had the luck to bring down that bloodthirsty brute, I could have scalped him with all the pleasure in life."

They never discovered anything about the murdered man, though they made inquiries in many directions. Harry often relates the adventure, now that they are back in England, to a circle of admiring auditors. Neither he nor Fred made a fortune, but they had enough luck to prevent them from feeling any regret that they had left the old world, though not sufficient to keep them permanently in the new.

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BY GEO. MANVILLE FENN.

CHAPTER I.—THE THIN END OF THE WEDGE.



It was from no numerical reason that Septimus Hardon bore his Christian name, for he was an only child; but his father, Octavius Hardon, Esquire, of Somesham, thought that, like his own, the name had a good bold sound with it—a sonorous, classical twang. There was a vibration with it that should impress people in the future life of the bearer, and add importance denied by Nature; but Mrs. Octavius, during her lifetime, was always in disgrace

with her lord for shortening the name into Sep, which was decidedly not impressive; while as for Septimus himself, he, too, was always in trouble with his father for being what he was—decidedly impressive, but not in the way his father wished; for to look at Septimus Hardon it might have been supposed that Nature, after trying her prentice hand on man, and then making “the lasses, O,” had had a quantity of rough stuff left—odds and ends, snips and scraps and awkward tags—when, sooner than there should be any waste of the precious material, she made Septimus Hardon. You could not say that he was deformed, but there was an odd look about him: his head seemed too big, and was badly thatched, while, by contrast, his body was too small; then his nose was a trifle on one side, and his mouth too wide, though it certainly disclosed an enviable set of teeth; his arms were long, and swung about too much, while one leg was slightly shorter than the other, short enough to make him limp; but there was mildness written in his pitted face, and honesty peered at you from his clear, bright eyes. And there was a true heart, too, in his breast, a large swelling heart, to which must have been due the obtrusiveness of his breast, and the decided roundness of his shoulders. And while Septimus Hardon had in some things most excellent taste—taste that his cousins sneered at, save when they wanted their music copied neatly, or their drawings touched up—yet dress was not his forte, since he always made the worst of himself by wearing clothes that did not fit him, and bad as his figure was, some tailor could have been found who would have guaranteed fit, if not style. Septimus generally wore shabby, faded black coats and vests, trousers of a dead leaf or baker’s drab, Blucher boots of the pattern known as contract—very bulgy and wrinkly;

and a real beaver hat, with a propensity for growing irritated under the brush, and becoming rough and startling.

Born in London, Septimus had lived since childhood with his father at the Grange, a solitary house about a couple of miles from Somesham town; and for years past the amusement and toil of the father and son had been centred in a little amateur printing-office, fitted up in a side-room, where they laboriously printed, page by page, the work that Octavius Hardon called his brother Thomas—the doctor practising in the town—a fool for not appreciating—a work upon political reform, one that was to astonish the world at large when it was completed; and though Septimus owned to himself that the world would be easily astonished, and its state rather startling, if it accepted and acted upon the opinions there set forth, yet, at forty years of age, he was still working on day after day at his father’s beck and call, obedient as a child, and never venturing an opinion of his own in presence of the irascible old man, who always called him “boy.”

It might have been supposed that, living so secluded a life himself, and being so strange of aspect, the idle god would have spared him as an object for his shafts; but for long years Septimus Hardon had loved in secret, loved and sorrowed—for he was not happy in the choice he had made. Mary Phillips was the betrothed of Tom Grey, the mate of an East Indian; and Septimus Hardon had been divided between love for the fair girl and friendship for his old schoolfellow, who made him the repository, in his frank, sailor-like fashion, of all his secrets.

So, while the sailor had wooed and won, Septimus Hardon had nursed his love for years, hardly realizing the passion he had harboured, till one night when, after a woodside ramble, he stood leaning upon a stile, and glancing down with bitterness at his uncouth form. The shadows were growing deeper, when, hearing approaching footsteps, he entered the wood, where before him lay many a dark mossy arcade—fit places for the sighs of a sorrowful heart—and he thought as he entered one that he could wander here in peace for a while; but the next instant the hot blood flushed up into his face, making his veins throb, as he stood with clenched hands gazing through the thin screen of leaves at Mary, leaning lovingly upon his friend’s arm, and listening with downcast eyes to his words.

The listener could hardly see the looks of those who passed, but their words seemed to ring through the stillness of the summer eve, each one falling with a heavy impact upon his ear, and vibrating through his frame, as if a sharp blow had been struck upon sonorous metal. For a moment a wild fury seemed to blind him, and he stood trembling with passion till the footsteps died away; when, half wild with agony, he dashed headlong, deeper and deeper into the wood, crashing through the light hazels, tripping over the tortuous roots; and at last, stumbling over a fallen bough, he fell heavily, and lay insensible in the calm depths of the wood. But thought soon dawned upon him again, and he lay and shuddered as the anguish of heart came slowly creeping back; for he now thoroughly understood his fate, and knew

that the bright dreamy structures in which his imagination had revelled had crumbled before him into bitter dust.

Time sped on, and after another voyage Tom Grey was back, and standing with his hands upon Septimus Hardon's shoulder.

"Come? Why, of course, my boy; what should we do without you? Mary begs that you won't refuse; and, Sep, old fellow, I shall expect you to be her bodyguard when I'm far away at sea."

Septimus Hardon was standing opposite to a tall pier-glass in his father's drawing-room when these words were spoken; and he glanced at himself, and then, sighing bitterly, wondered whether, had he been as other men, he would have been chosen. But the next moment the thought was crushed down, and he was returning the frank, handsome sailor's honest grasp.

Septimus Hardon nursed his love, but he hid it, buried it in the deepest recesses of his heart; and no one knew of the secret held by the bridegroom's friend, who held by one of the pews when a swimming came upon him in the church, and he would have fallen had not Tom Grey grasped his arm. But that soon passed, and the stricken man added his congratulations to those of the friends assembled to follow the couple in whose path flowers were strewn—the couple joined together till death did them part.

And that was soon—soon to the loving wife—soon to the husband whose journeyings were upon the great deep; but years passed first, during which quiet, vacillating Septimus Hardon was the faithful friend of his schoolfellow's wife, and the patient slave of her bright-eyed child, at whose bidding he was always ready to attend, even to the neglect of his father's book.

Then came the day when, after whispering of hope for many months, Septimus learned that his fears were but too well founded, and that his friend's ship had gone down with all on board.

A bitter trial was his, to break the fatal tidings to the widow; and he stood trembling as she, the woman he had for long years worshipped in secret, reviled him and cursed him in her madness for the news—the blasting news that he had brought upon her home.

Then two years glided away, when the widow, passing through many a phase of sorrow, sickness, and misery, sat hoping on that he whom she mourned would yet return, and all the while ignorant of the hand that supplied her wants, or of the good friend with so great a love for fancy-work that she sent order after order, liberally paid for by the hands of Septimus Hardon. The beauty of the past slowly faded, so that she became haggard and thin; a lasting illness seemed to have her in its grasp; but still faithful to his trust, true to the love he bore her, Septimus Hardon set at naught the frowns of his father and the sneers of his cousins, while he devoted himself to the alleviation of the widow's sufferings, and kept her from the additional stings of want; for she had been left totally unprovided for by her young and hopeful husband.

And what was the result? Such as might have been expected from such a nature as Septimus

Hardon's. Patient and true, the love he bore this woman was hidden for years; and then, when in her hopeless misery the widow turned her head upon the sick pillow, and asked his advice, he told her to give him the right to protect her, to be to her child, little Lucy, a second father, and then shrank, crushed and trembling, from the room, affrighted at her look of horror, and the words accusatory which told him of faithlessness to his trust, to his schoolfellow, who she felt yet lived.

But it was only in her hopeful heart he lived; and, six months after forbidding Septimus her house, Mary Grey, weeping bitterly over the discovery she had made of the hand that had so long sustained her, wrote these words, and sent them to the Grange—

"Forgive me!"

CHAPTER II.—SEP'S COMPLAINT.

OCTAVIUS HARDON'S book was at a standstill, and the world still in the thick darkness of ignorance as regarded political reform upon his basis, for Septimus Hardon was ill, sick almost unto death. He had slowly grown listless and dull, careless of everything, daily becoming weaker, until, apparently without ailment, he had taken to his bed, over which his uncle, Doctor Hardon, his assistant, Mr. Reston—a handsome, cynical-looking man, and Mr. Brande, the rival practitioner—had all concurred in shaking their heads and declaring that nothing could be done, since Septimus Hardon was suffering from the effects of an internal malformation.

They were quite right: the poor fellow had too much heart; and though the wise of this earth declare that people do not die of or for love, yet most assuredly Septimus Hardon would slowly have faded from his place among men, and, before many months had passed over his head, gone where there is rest.

But there was medicine of the right kind coming, and the very perusal, with lack-lustre eyes, of the prescription brought to his bed-room sent a flash of light into the glassy orbs; and in the course of a few weeks Septimus disappointed the doctors by getting well, Nature having arranged respecting the internal malformation.

"I don't think you did him a bit of good, Mr. Brande—not a bit—not a bit—not a bit," said Octavius to the rival practitioner. "He never took any of your stuffs. Now, come and set me up again, for I'm wrong."

"Better, yes, he's better," said the old man to Mr. Reston. "Good morning—good morning—good morning."

Doctor Hardon had sent his assistant over; but in place of seeing the patient he found himself bowed out; and on loudly complaining to the doctor—not on account of missing his interview with the patient, but for reasons of his own—Doctor Hardon now called.

"Well, Tom?—well, Tom?—well, Tom?" said Octavius, smiling cynically, and looking his younger brother well over from top to toe. "What is it, Tom?"

"Oh, about Septimus?"

"There, be off—I'm busy. Septimus is getting on, and Mr. Brande will physic him if he wants any

more. A man who can't morally physic his own children can't do other people's good."

Doctor Hardon, portly and pompous, rose to speak; but Octavius took hold of his arm, and led him to the door, giving him his hat at the same time.

"Good-bye, Tom—good-bye—good-bye. Don't come till I send for you again. You always were a fool, and an ass, and an idiot, and a humbug, Tom—always—always—always."

There was a slight storm at Doctor Hardon's that day, and neither his wife nor daughters ventured much into his presence; but when, some weeks afterwards, the doctor knew of a scene that took place in his brother's house, he smiled softly, and after a fashion of his own he purr'd, while that night he was graciousness itself.

Octavius Hardon sat writing, and listening to the words of his son, till, as he grew interested, the pen ceased to form letters, and at last he pushed back his chair, overturning the inkstand, so that the sable current streamed across a fresh paragraph of his book. He thrust up his glasses, and sheltered his eyes, to look at his son—the son who had obeyed his every word and look, who had never seemed to have a thought of his own—the son who was even now, in spite of his forty years, but a boy; and as he looked, he saw that he seemed inches taller, that there was an elate look in his countenance, which it would have been hard at that moment to have called plain.

"Going to be what?" gasped the father.

"To be married," said the son, firmly.

"Married?"

"Married, father."

"And to whom? One of those hussies, your cousins?"

"To Mrs. Grey," replied Septimus.

"What?" gasped the old man. "To a woman—a widow with a family—a proper inmate for the union—a pauper!"

"Hush, father!" cried Septimus. "I love her."

And he said those simple words with such reverence, such tenderness, that the old man paused, and gazed almost wonderingly at the aspect worn by his son; but by degrees his anger gained the ascendant, and a stormy scene ensued, in which the father threatened and besought in turn, while the son remained calm and immovable. Once he shrank back and held up his hands deprecatingly, when the old man spoke harshly of the stricken woman; but directly after his face lit up with a pride and contentment which almost maddened the speaker.

"You cannot keep a wife," he gasped.

Septimus smiled.

"You were always a helpless, vacillating fool, and you have nothing but the few hundreds from your mother."

Septimus bowed his head.

"Dog!" roared the old man. "I'll leave every penny I have to your uncle's hussies if you dare to marry this woman."

The son smiled sadly, but remained silent.

"Why don't you speak?" roared Octavius, foaming with rage.

"What would you have me say, father?" said Septimus, calmly.

"Say!" gasped the old man; "why, that you are a thankless, graceless, unnatural scoundrel. But where do you mean to go?"

"To London," said Septimus.

"To London!" sneered the old man; "and what for? No; go to Hanwell, or Colney Hatch, or sink your paltry money at a private asylum, if they will take you. To London, to leave me to my infirmities, with my book unfinished! But you'll take my curse with you; and may you brazen, scheming woman—"

"Hush!" cried Septimus, fiercely, as he laid his hand upon his father's lips, when, beside himself with fury, Octavius struck his son heavily in the face, and then, as he fell back, the old man seized the poker, but only to throw it crashing back into the fender.

Just at that moment, the door opened, a tall, dark, handsome girl hurried into the room, and stood between father and son, gazing in an agitated way from one anger-wrought countenance to the other.

"Septimus! Uncle!" she cried, "what is the matter?"

"He's a villain, girl—an unnatural scoundrel. He's going to marry that woman—Grey's wife—widow—relict—curse her!"

"What, poor Mrs. Grey?" said the girl, with the tears springing to her eyes.

"God bless you for that, Agnes!" cried Septimus, passionately, as he caught her in his arms, and kissed her affectionately.

"Yes, *poor* Mrs. Grey," sneered the old man, looking savagely at the pair before him. "But there, let him go; and mind *you*, or you won't have what I've got. But there, you will, and your sisters will have something to flier and jeer at then, and your father will purr in my face, and spit and swear behind my back. Bah! a cursed tom-cat humbug!"

"Hush, uncle dear!" whispered Agnes, laying one hand upon his arm and the other upon his breast, her lip quivering as she spoke—"hush! you are angry. Don't say any more, Septimus."

"No," replied Septimus, sternly; "I have done."

"No, *no*, NO! you have not," roared the old man, firing up again. "You have to beg my pardon, and tell me that this folly is at an end."

"I'll beg your pardon, father," said Septimus, sternly; "and I do ask it for anything I have done amiss; but I have pledged my word to the woman I have loved these ten years."

And again there was the look of proud elation on Septimus Hardon's countenance.

"And you are going to London, eh?" said Octavius.

"To London," said Septimus, calmly.

The old man frowned, pressed his lips tightly together, and, holding Agnes firmly by her shoulder, he stood pointing with one hand towards the door.

"Then go!" he said; "go—go!"

"Oh, Septimus!" cried Agnes, in appealing tones—"uncle!"

"You're mad, Septimus Hardon," said the old

man, coldly. "Mad—stark mad: a private asylum, Septimus—an asylum—mad! You're mad—stark mad! Go!"

CHAPTER III.—FURTHER INTRODUCTIONS.

IN the faint light of early morning, some ten years after the scene described in the last chapter, at that cold dank hour when the struggle is going on between night and day, and the former is being slowly and laboriously conquered—when Chancery-lane looked at its worst, and the passed-away region of Bennett's-rents more sordid and desolate than ever, the gas-lamps still glimmered in the street, while the solitary light at the end of the Rents yet burned dimly, and as if half-destroyed by mephitic vapour, when the door of No. 27 was opened, closed loudly, and a man clattered heavily over the broken pavement, creating an unnecessary amount of noise, as he slowly made his way out through the narrow archway into the street, but watching on either side with observant eye the while. It seemed darker when he reached the Lane, where, after glancing hastily up and down for a minute, he softly thrust off his boots—a pair of heavy lace-ups—and then, taking them in his hand, he ran lightly back, with the stooping gait and eager, hound-like air of some savage beast on the trail of its prey. But the next moment he was at the door he had quitted, had opened it softly and slipped in, ignorant that a face at a third-floor window opposite was watching his movements with looks yet keener than his own.

Holding his breath, the man stood in the passage of the old house for a few seconds; then, passing along softly, he stole down the damp, half-rotten cellar stairs, starting once, and giving vent to a half-suppressed ejaculation as a cat dashed hastily by him, when he paused to wipe the cold perspiration from his forehead with his sleeve. Then he stood at the bottom, in front of the cellar door, in the damp, dark place, where ashes gritted beneath his feet, and the foul smell of half-decayed vegetable refuse arose. Apparently guided by caution, he now carefully felt around him, letting his hands glide along the wall, while his feet probed every corner, to insure that he was alone, before, after listening an instant at the foot of the stairs, he slipped quickly through the door, and stood in the large front cellar.

It was lighter here, for the morning was struggling down through the grating; and now, after a careful tour of inspection, peering into every dim corner, the man passed through a low archway and into a back cellar, darker and damper than the first—a place that had once been used for wine, and into every one of whose cobweb-hung and sawdust-floored bins the man looked in turn, as he made his way farther from the light.

He was a big, heavy man; but there was something soft and cat-like in his movements as he passed along the dark cellar. The obscurity seemed to have but little effect upon him, for the way appeared familiar; and when right at the end he stopped to listen attentively for a few moments, before, going down upon hands and knees, he crawled rapidly, and more cat-like than ever, into one of the darkest bins. Then there was a low grating noise heard,

as if a heavy stone had been pushed aside; there was a deep expiration, as of one moving a weight; a rustling, the grating sound once more, and then for a few minutes silence.

The light descending the grating struggled hard to illumine the obscure place; but this was one of the strongholds of darkness—a spot where it lurked through the bright hours of the day; and the efforts of the light only served to faintly illumine the front-cellar, where stood a huge water-butt with a pipe leading to it for the supply of the house; and here now began an echoing drip, drip, drip; while from the tap came a strange, sighing, hissing sound, as the air was forced by distant pressure along the pipe.

Now came the sharp crack of a stair, the very faint rustle of a dress, and then slowly and cautiously appeared, coming forward, as it were, out of the gloom, like one of the phantoms of a nightmare, the face that had been gazing from the opposite window—an old, eager, hawk-like, pinched woman's face—peering through the opening of the ajar door, and followed directly by the shabbily-clothed body.

Cautiously, and with eyes peering in every direction, the woman advanced into the cellar, her head thrust forward, with her thin, gray hair pushed behind her ears, which twitched and seemed on the alert to catch the faintest sound. Close behind her followed a cropped poodle-dog, which now ran forward, when, at a menacing gesture, it half stood up, but the raised hand made it shrink down instantly, and, crouching to the earth, it crawled for a few moments and then lay motionless, while its mistress, as if walking in the steps of the man, nimbly examined the cellar, even peering behind and in the great butt, which her thrust-in hand showed her was nearly full of water.

She then softly made her way to the dark arch, and, with one hand holding by the side, leaned in and tried to penetrate the darkness, but without avail; when, muttering softly to herself, she stepped in, but only to pass out the next moment, shaking her head, as with one hand she busily searched her pocket, from which she drew forth a box of matches. Stepping once more beneath the arch, she struck a match upon the damp wall, and a long phosphorescent line of light shone feebly out, but the match did not blaze.

Impatiently throwing down the splint of wood, the woman tried another and another, but without effect, till she rubbed one upon the outside of the box, when it ignited silently, and illumined the place for a little distance round; when, eagerly catching up the tiny splints thrown down, she lit first one and then another, and as they burned their brief span a hasty examination was made. Everywhere the same features: old cobwebbed wine-bins, damp and fungoid growths; and though the woman peered even into the bin where the man had so lately crawled, nothing presented itself to her hurried gaze more than in the others, and as her last lit splint burned out she stepped lightly back to the entrance.

As she stood within the front cellar she turned once more to gaze down the dark place she had quitted, when a low, grating noise struck her ear,

and, starting back, she was about to run to the steps; but, making an effort over herself, she stood, trembling, and listened.

The noise continued for a few seconds; then came the sound as of clothes rustling against a wall; then the heavy breathing, the grating once more, and then silence, as, turning her back to both entrances, the woman stole softly to where her dog lay crouching upon the damp floor.

The next moment a sharp yelp and a succession of howls came from the stricken dog as the woman caught it by the thick curled hair of its neck, and beat it savagely.

"Ah, then, *méchant chien*, bad tog, how I have looked for you!" she cried. "Why do you steal down here? There, there, there!"

And each word was followed by a blow, while the wretched little animal lay cowering and yelping on the ground, till, lifted by its ears, the skin seemed drawn out of place, the eyes elongated, and the poor brute, now silent, the most abject specimen of canine misery imaginable.

There was a quick step behind the woman, and, as if surprised, she started, and turned to gaze at the evil face behind her, for the man had stepped close to the entrance-door.

"Ah! Meester Jarker, but you did frighten me. My bad tog he runs away. What shall I do wis him?"

The man looked keenly at the speaker, and slowly drew a large clasp-knife, which he opened, and the woman could hardly repress a shudder as there, in the dim light, she saw him run his thumb along the edge.

"Ah, yes!" she said, with a half laugh, "he deserves, but I cannot spare him; I must teach him better than to come into uzzer people's house. I look everywhere before I think of dis cellar."

The man did not speak, but glanced first at the mistress, then at the dog, and then at his knife and the great butt; and then involuntarily his suspicious looks turned to the dark arch of the inner cellar, when once more their eyes met in a long, penetrating stare.

"I once knowed somethin' as got its throat cut for coming into this here cellar. I aint sure, but I think that 'ere was a dawg," growled the man.

"Oh, yes, he must not come any more, Meester Jarker; but you will not cut my throat. Oh, no," laughed the woman, jeeringly, as sending her dog on first, and fixing her eyes upon the man, she slowly backed out of the cellar. "Oh, no, for we will both be good, and come no more."

FLY-FISHING AT SEA.—From sixteen to twenty fish a day at sea have been killed on good strong single gut, varying from 3 lbs. to 10 lbs. each fish, with bright gaudy salmon flies, tied on the bright or wick-turned hooks, principally bass and mackerel.

A GOOD ear cannot distinguish one sound from another, unless there is an interval of one-ninth of a second between. Sounds must, therefore, succeed each other at an interval of one-ninth of a second to be heard distinctly. Now, the velocity of a sound being 1,120 feet a second, in one-ninth of a second the sound would travel 124 feet.

The Fish Inquiry.

THE inquiry into the alleged destruction of small fry in the Thames Estuary which is now being conducted by Messrs. Buckland and Walpole has not yet justified more than a faint flutter of anxiety on the part of the lovers of whitebait. Witnesses in plenty have been forthcoming, and have borne their testimony with their usual freedom and variety. The defenders of the whitebait fishery, in particular, may be congratulated upon a bold and generous style of defence, which almost recalls that of the debtor who pleaded that he did not owe the money, had paid it, and had been forgiven the debt by his creditor. Whitebait, say they, is a separate species; if it were not a separate species it would not matter, inasmuch as fish cannot come up the Thames because of the sewage; and even if this were not so, herrings are never caught in the Thames at all, and sprats are a drug in the market, because of Scotch competition, so that they are actually sold for manure. This last plea is rather an interesting one; for it so happens that the very same complaint has been made against the Scotch sprat fishery which is now brought against the English fishery of whitebait. It is maintained by many people that "garvies," as the Scotch sprat is locally called, are themselves young herrings, and that the Moray Firth fisheries are injuriously affected by their capture.

All these matters, however, must be left to the commissioners and other experts to judge. If the eating of whitebait is a wasteful consumption of corn in the blade, it must, we suppose, be given up, or, at any rate, restricted. The eater will part from his food with regret; we had almost used the Homeric phrase and said "unwillingly from them unwilling." For it must surely be more agreeable to a whitebait of taste to be caught before sin and sorrow can fade and wither him, to be cooked with care and eaten with appreciative delight, than to be allowed to attain the dubious honours of sprathood, and then be consigned to the manure heap.

One of the witnesses, however, gave evidence, the interest of which is independent of the main question. There has prevailed, even among discerning eaters, great doubt and diversity as to the history of whitebait, considered not as a national product but as a food. Some people have put its consumption down as quite a recent practice. Others have held that Pitt, the younger, in the intervals of weathering the storm, consumed whitebait, and thereby made it at once a Ministerial and a patriotic dainty. Mr. Cannon, who, if not the father of whitebait, deserves on his own showing the title of grandson of the father of whitebait, gave evidence which ought to settle the question of antiquity. Mr. Cannon has himself caught whitebait for sixty years, and his father and his father's father did so for forty years before him. 1780 is assigned as the exact date of the first catch. At first Cannon the elder used his capture merely as a bait for eels, and hence the name which has itself been the subject of controversy, and in which ingenious Frenchmen have seen a hybrid compound, signifying white beasts. After a time, however, it occurred to Mr. Cannon—possibly in consequence of such an accident as befel

Bobo, the son of Hoti—that the little fish were meat for the masters of eels. Unluckily there has yet arisen no Lamb to recount this history. Mr. Cannon, however, sold his fish, and so did his son, and his son's son after him, and others bought and ate them. At last, forty years ago, there arose a Lord Mayor who had doubts on the subject of whitebait; doubts identical with those which produced the present inquiry. Mr. Cannon, however, faced the Lord Mayor and all his water bailiffs, and obtained a victory over them. Thenceforward the consumption of whitebait has grown and increased. Within very recent memory it was an almost unheard of thing to meet with it at an ordinary dinner table, and the average fishmonger would nearly as soon have thought of keeping slices of kraken or fillets of sea serpent as of exposing whitebait as a regular article of sale. Nowadays it is to be bought in every street of London and of the suburbs, and even in most considerable provincial towns. Once upon a time the cookery books descended to the suggestion of an abomination called mock whitebait, consisting of slips of vegetable marrow. Nowadays the frequenter of ordinary London restaurants grumbles at the manager if whitebait does not figure on the bills of fare as soon as March has begun. There is even talk of whitebait caught in the Frith of Forth; but for ourselves we doubt the ability of the *Première de la Quatrième*, as a great Frenchman translated that estuary, to produce the genuine staple of Greenwich and Gravesend.

Many causes contributed, doubtless, to produce this popularity. The Ministerial dinner, which gradually became an institution, until Mr. Gladstone, with a Roman indifference to the susceptibilities of his constituents, temporarily abolished it, had something to do with the vogue doubtless, and so had a well-known farce. But, on the whole, it seems likely that the literary men of the last generation had nearly as much to do with "making" Greenwich as their brethren of art and letters in France have had with making Barbizon, Etretat, Le Croisic, and twenty other resorts, marine and inland. Even before science had obligingly combined fish, phosphorus, and fancy in a pleasant phonetic triad, literature had shown itself well inclined to the long-drawn but digestible banquets of Greenwich and Blackwall. Thackeray, as he himself somewhere confesses, can hardly get through a story without taking his characters to the riverside. It was there that Paul de Florac discovered the meaning of the mysterious British idiom, "A handle to one's name;" there, too, if we recollect rightly, that Clive had that terrible conflict with his cousin. If Denis Duval had only lived, it is not impossible that we should have had the date of whitebait consumption, which must have coincided with Denis's youth, fixed with the accuracy in regard to all manners and customs with which Thackeray is wont to put to the blush the minor novelist who writes at ease. Peacock, too, has left the delights of fish dinners inscribed in three languages, for the benefit of posterity; and other men of letters, whose names it were long to tell, have followed suit. Even foreigners have followed suit; and Gautier has spoken of whitebait, though not as we could wish.

Hence it is that a pilgrimage to the scene of Sir Walter Raleigh's exploit combines a notable bundle of excesses and attractions. English history and hero-worship unite with gluttony and a devotion to Thames sunsets, even in the case of those who cannot explain their craving for phosphorus by any exceptional activity of their brains. Large dinners are the cause of small ones, and the man who has dined in the company of fifty or a hundred people at a set banquet returns to try the effect of a small society as compared with a large one. Lastly, too, there is the country cousin, who demands above all things to go through this experience. But it is to be observed that none of these excuses justify the consumption of whitebait in the seclusion of the domestic circle, where, by the way, it is generally very badly cooked.

If Mr. Buckland finally sees fit to deprive us of the "bait," or to curtail the supply, let it be humbly suggested that the curtailment should be effected with discretion. It might, indeed, be difficult to stamp the fishers after the fashion of packs of cards, or to confiscate all found beyond a certain distance from the river; but, at any rate, the interesting evidence of Mr. Cannon shows the necessity, in these days of anniversaries, of a slight postponement of any fatal or absolute prohibition. 1880 is not far off, and a final commemorative banquet on the centenary of the first catch will be clearly necessary. The health of the elder Mr. Cannon should be proposed, with congratulations that he did not live to see his invention disestablished. The interesting but, if we may believe Mr. Buckland, rather mixed dainty, should be eaten solemnly, as for the last time. After that, the company standing up—at least, to quote the verses of Peacock, to which we have already alluded, "all who had strength to stand"—would naturally drink in silence the memory of whitebait, and thenceforward confine themselves to commemorative imitations, more or less skilfully executed in vegetable marrow.

The Beaver at Home.

By A. H. GREEN.

I HAVE been for three years almost constantly engaged in trapping beavers, so that what remarks I may have to make on their habits and history, though somewhat at variance with the stereotyped notions prevalent in compilations, are yet the result of my own independent observations.

About January their tracks may be seen in the snow, near the outlet of the lakes where young fir trees grow. At this time they prefer young fir trees as food to any other kind of tree, the reason, doubtless, being that at this period the sap has not risen in the willow or alder. It is not often that females are caught in the spring; and the males seem to travel about, as the runs are not used so regularly as they are when the beavers are living near.

Some of the beavers become torpid during January, especially those living near lakes, swamps, or large sheets of water which are frozen. They do not lay in a store of sticks for winter use, as stated

by Captain Bonville, as one day's supply of sticks for a single beaver would fill a house; and if a stick were cut in the autumn, before the winter was over it would have lost its sap, and would not be eaten by the beaver. A beaver never eats the bark of a tree that is dead, though he may gnaw a hard piece of wood to keep his teeth down. A little grass is generally found in the houses, but is used as a bed and not for food.

If February is an open month, the beavers begin to come out of their retreats, and frequent any running water near them; but it is generally March before the bulk of them come out of winter quarters. When they come out they are lean; but their furs are still good, and continue so till the middle of May—though if a trapper thought of revisiting the place, he would not trap after April, so as to allow them to breed quietly.

About the end of March the beaver begins to "call." Both male and females "call" and answer one another. Sometimes on one "calling," half-a-dozen will answer from different parts of the lake. I have known beavers to "call" as late as August. Males fight during the rutting season most fiercely. Hardly a skin is without scars; and large pieces are often bitten out of their tails. The beaver holds like a bull-dog, but does not snap. It shakes its head so as to tear. When trapped, it will face a man, dodge a stick, and then seize it, taking chips out of it at every bite. It seems to attack from behind.

The period of gestation is known with little certainty, as they are never trapped in summer. The female brings forth some time about the end of June; and it is a year before a beaver is full-grown; and even then it has not the *embonpoint* of an elderly beaver.

I have read that the beaver breeds at any time during the year; but this cannot be, or all the kittens that are trapped in the fall would not be of the same size. It produces from three to four at a birth. The teats are placed between the fore legs. The young (called kittens) whimper like young puppies when suckling, even when two months old. The females prefer deep sedgy lakes to bring their young up in, and they feed on grass about that time of the year (July or August). They feed on willow about April, May, and June. I cannot say whether they are born blind or not, but suspect so. They are very fond of water-lilies in the spring. It is with me a matter of uncertainty whether the female litters in a house, under the ground, or in the dry sedges; but I should think underground or in the houses. In the autumn more females are caught than males. Trapping commences in September and continues to May; after that the trappers leave them alone, so that I do not know much about their doings in the summer.

They begin to build their dams about July or August, as soon as the summer floods begin to subside. For this purpose they generally choose a bend in the stream, with high and clayey banks, and commence by felling a large tree that will reach across the water; or they fell a tree on each side of the water so as to meet in the centre. They then float sticks from 6 to 4 feet long down to the dam, and

lay them horizontally, filling in the spaces with roots, tufts of grass, leaves, and clay or mud. The branches of the first tree are the perpendicular supports, almost all the remaining sticks being placed horizontally and crosswise. The last 6 or 8 inches in height is very insecurely constructed, being nothing but mud and leaves.

The highest dam I ever saw was only about 4 feet 6 inches; but the generality of them are not above 2 or 3 feet. The action of the water by bringing down mud, gravel, or fallen leaves, strengthens the dam by making a sloping bank against it; and, the willow sticks of which it is composed sending forth their roots and shoots, the dam in course of time becomes a fixture, bound together as strongly as well could be. The winter floods almost invariably destroy the upper part of the dam, which is re-constructed afresh every year. The shape of the dam is almost always semicircular, with the crown of the arch down stream, thus reversing the order of things; but I have no doubt this is in consequence of the heads of the first or principal trees being floated down stream when they are first thrown. The body of water raised by these dams varies, of course, according to the fall of the original stream, from a small hole of 20 feet diameter to a lake of miles in length. In the former case the beaver builds his house close to the dam, so as to get depth of water, and there saves himself from any hungry panther or wolf who might feel inclined to indulge in beaver meat. The beaver also burrows into the banks of streams, always taking care to have two entrances, one under (or close to) the water, and a smaller air-hole on land. With a good dog, capital sport may be had on some of the smaller rivulets leading into or out of a lake. The houses are formed of water-logged sticks placed horizontally in the water. They have always two or more entrances, and a small chamber with a little grass for the beaver to lie on. The top of the house is constructed very thick, to guard against attacks by animals. Mud and roots are used to make the house solid; but no mud is seen from the outside, as the top is covered with loose sticks left there by the beaver after taking the bark off. The houses are generally about 4 feet in height, and about 6 in diameter on the outside, and would hold about four beavers, though I have known small houses to hold two only.

The traps generally used in securing the beaver are large steel traps with a strong spring at each end, and fastened with a chain, from 4 to 6 feet long, to a pole, which is stuck in the bottom of the water as far out as the chain will allow, so that the beaver, when he feels the trap, may run into deep water; and as he gets tired, the weight of trap taking him down, he drowns. A beaver, when trapped, never tries to get to land, but makes a dive for the deepest water; and should the water be shallower than 4 feet, he will, in a short time, amputate his foot so as to relieve himself. He always takes his foot off at a joint, and draws the sinews out of his shoulder instead of biting them through. The stump heals up; and I think the beaver is none the worse for it, though he gets shy, and, perhaps, tells the other beavers to beware of traps. A beaver is gene-

rally caught by his fore foot; and should the trap be set too deep below water, his toe-nail only gets caught. The trap is set in the beaver run, or just where it springs into a hole in the bank. It must not be set in too shallow water, for then he amputates his foot—or in too deep, for in that case he does not get caught at all, but swims over the trap. The proper depth to set a trap is five inches. The beaver is then caught by his fore foot. Sometimes the teeth of a beaver are found to have grown beyond their proper length. I once saw one with the lower teeth $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches beyond the gums. He was caught in a trap, and was miserably thin; but, singularly enough, he had about the finest fur I ever saw. He was an aged animal. It is rare to see a beaver which has been trapped with its teeth whole, as they are often broken in trying to get out of the trap. A full-grown beaver weighs about 34 lbs. I am not an anatomist; but still I do not think there is anything very peculiar about its internal structure, except that the heart weighs a mere nothing—the cavities being so very large. An old beaver when shot sinks, a kitten floats. A good skin will weigh $2\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.; but it is very rarely that one weighing that amount is caught in Vancouver Island. There are at present very few beavers on either Vancouver Island or the mainland, compared with what there must have been some years ago; but they have been increasing for the last six years; and no doubt by the time beaver skins come into fashion again there will be a plentiful supply.

Charles Mathews.

(From the Daily News.)

BY the death of this eminent comedian the English stage has lost its gayest and airiest spirit. Charles James Mathews, whose peculiar brilliance and vivacity distinguished him among his comrades, doubtless inherited those rare qualities from his father, the inventor and actor of the celebrated monologue entitled "Mathews at Home," the friend and companion of Alvanley, Hook, Hood, and other joyous spirits, whose charm consisted rather in the manner than the matter of their jokes, and who possessed the now almost extinct faculty of not only enjoying themselves but communicating their sense of enjoyment to others.

The younger Mathews was born at Liverpool on the 26th December, 1803—a date concerning which as many bets have been made as on the famous misquotation from "Hudibras." With the free and easy manner common to those accustomed to back their own opinion by a wager, the bettors frequently wrote to Mr. Mathews to decide between them, and invariably received the curt but courteous reply, "Truly yours, Charles Mathews, born"—as above. The elder Mathews, having himself been educated at Merchant Taylors' School, naturally sought the aid of Sir John Silvester, the Recorder of the City of London, to secure a like advantage for his son.

Intended for the Church, the boy was received into the family of the Rev. Mr. Cherry, the headmaster of Merchant Taylors'; but, being of delicate

constitution, and not able to bear close confinement, his father was compelled to remove him soon after he had gained the fifth form, and then placed him under the care of Dr. Richardson, of the Clapham-road, who numbered among his pupils the sons of Charles Kemble, Young, Terry, and Liston. Having made great progress with his studies, he would next, according to the programme laid down by his father, have gone to one of the Universities to complete his education for the Church, had he not himself determined to become an architect. Much disheartened, his father nevertheless yielded to his wishes, and articted him to Pugin. At a later date he pursued his architectural studies in the office of Nash.

In 1822, young Mathews, who had previously figured in amateur theatricals, made his appearance at a private performance at the English Opera House (on the site of the present Lyceum Theatre) in the character of Dorival, in the French vaudeville of "Les Comédiens d'Etampes"—which he afterwards adapted for the English stage under the title of "He would be an Actor." As the son of one of the most celebrated men of the day, he attracted a brilliant audience, and the interest felt in his appearance was fully justified by the result, his imitation of Perlet being so good that he at once received an offer of engagement from the management of the French Theatre in London.

Having lost all hope of seeing his son a clergyman, the elder Mathews encouraged him to adopt the stage as a profession; but the young architect was full of enthusiasm, and clung tenaciously to his favourite art. In the following year he accompanied Lord Blessington, a patron of the drama and staunch friend of his father's, to Ireland, the earl having decided on building a mansion on his estate of Mountjoy Forest, Tyrone. In a letter full of kindness and generous appreciation, Lord Blessington tried to induce the father to come to Mountjoy on a visit. In addition to "the best venison, best Highland mutton, best rabbits, and best claret in Ireland," he offers his friend some famous "comic dresses" and other attractions. For some reason the elder Mathews did not go to Ireland, and the younger built no mansion there.

On reaching London, Lord Blessington invited him to accompany him to Naples, in order that he might pursue his architectural studies in Italy. This order was gladly accepted, and Mr. Mathews remained with the Blessingtons and Count d'Orsay for about two years at the Palazzo Belvedere.

It was during this period that the quarrel between d'Orsay and Mathews occurred. Count Alfred d'Orsay—Byron's *cupidon déchainé*—was just then in the prime of early manhood, clever, accomplished, physically beautiful and strong, and not altogether devoid of that insolence which frequently accompanies a superabundance of natural gifts. He had remarked to Lord Blessington that on an excursion to Capri, Mathews had taken plenty of sketch-books with him but made few drawings, adding also that it was a pity he did not cultivate more sedulously his talent in that direction. This observation being heedlessly repeated to the subject of it, he naturally told Count d'Orsay

that he should have made it to him and not to his friends. This remonstrance provoked an outbreak of the most ruffianly character, and a threat of downright personal violence from d'Orsay, whereupon Mr. Mathews asked Mr. R. R. Madden to carry a message from him to the Count. From that moment d'Orsay behaved well in every way. He at once accepted the challenge, and as the difference in rank between him and the challenger had been alluded to he waived it at once, with the characteristic remark that he would be the last person to claim the privilege of "rank, so often compromised by so many fools." Mischief was prevented by the interference of Lord Blessington, and d'Orsay apologized in the handsomest and kindest manner. During his residence in Italy Mr. Mathews made a large number of sketches, many of which are now in his pretty house in the Belgrave-road, and developed an extraordinary talent for mimicry, even to the extent of picking up local dialects of Italian.

In 1825 Mr. Mathews returned to England, and it was while in the exercise of his profession in Wales that he wrote the ballad of "Jenny Jones," which achieved extraordinary popularity, and he afterwards assisted his father in the composition of his "At Home," many of the brightest points in which were thought out by him while he was sitting late at the supper-table with his father and his friends, John Murray, Cartwright, and Savory. Being a very moderate eater and drinker, he found these convivialities very wearisome, and by practice acquired the habit of entirely abstracting himself from the scene. Mr. Mathews attached very great value to this faculty of abstraction, to which, in conjunction with the knack of going to sleep at a moment's notice, he attributed his perpetual cheerfulness. A ten minutes' nap was to him "like turning over a fresh page." Difficulties vanished and life dawned anew for this, the most hopeful of men. In troubled times he exercised his faculty of abstraction to the full; and while a temporary inmate of Lancaster Gaol, busied himself in making the sketch of the interior of that gaunt building which now hangs in the snuggerly at the top of his house.

In 1827 Mr. Mathews left England for Italy on a professional tour, accompanied by Mr. James d'Egville. At Florence the two friends visited Lord Normanby, who was giving private theatricals. At Lord Normanby's request Mr. Mathews joined the company of amateurs, and played a large number of characters, ranging from Dogberry and Falstaff to Sir Benjamin Backbite, and in the meantime built a theatre for Lord Normanby and painted a drop-scene for it. While in Rome he was attacked with the fever of the country, and finding that, after six months' treatment by the local Sangrados, he was no better, insisted on returning to England, in the teeth of their remonstrances, and finally shook off the disease.

In 1832 he obtained the appointment of district surveyor of Bow and Bethnal-green, and having already written several pieces for the stage, produced at the Haymarket Theatre in that year "The Wolf and the Lamb," and "The Court Jester," and in 1833 "My Wife's Mother." In the same year, while on a visit to the Duke of Bedford, at Woburn

Abbey, he figured prominently in some private theatricals, and in the next turned his attention to painting.

In 1835, however, the death of his father brought him a share of the managerial throne of the Adelphi Theatre. The joint rule of Yates and Mathews the younger did not prove successful, although the former was a consummate "all-round" actor, and the latter could "as an architect build theatres, as an artist paint the scenery, as an author write the pieces, and as an actor perform them." Abandoning the Adelphi management, Mr. Mathews made his first appearance on a regular stage at the Olympic on the 7th December, 1835, as George Rattleton, in the "Hump-backed Lover," written by himself, and in a drama by Mr. Leman Rede, called the "Old and Young Stager." His success as an actor was complete, and the objection that he "wanted weight," subsequently urged against his Goldfinch and other impersonations, was as ridiculous as it would be to complain of the Tarantella for not being the Minuet de la Cour, or of dry champagne for not being full-bodied, fruity port.

In 1838 Mr. Mathews married the celebrated Madame Vestris, and, after a trip to America, opened Covent Garden. During his tenure of management he produced Mr. Boucicault's so-called "actor's play," "London Assurance," and many important revivals. In 1847 he again ascended that "managerial throne" which proved so unlucky to him, this time at the Lyceum, and there produced, by the help of Mr. Planché and Mr. William Beverly, those delightful extravaganzas, "The Golden Branch," "The King of the Peacocks," "King Charming," &c. In 1855—two years before the death of his wife—he retired from theatrical management "for ever," and confined his work entirely to acting.

In 1858 he made another trip to America, and married his second wife, Mrs. Davenport; and has since then been so familiar with the public that a recapitulation of his successful impersonations would be rather wearisome than interesting. Perhaps the parts with which his name will longest be associated are those of Mr. Affable Hawk, in the "Game of Speculation"—an English adaptation of Balzac's "Mercadet"—and Sir Charles Coldstream in "Used Up"—also an English version of a French play, "L'Homme Blasé." At Paris, in 1863, he reversed the natural order of things by appearing at the Variétés in a French translation, executed by himself, of Mr. Blanchard Jerrold's "Cool as a Cucumber." Since then he and Mrs. Mathews have played in Australia, New Zealand, the Sandwich Islands, San Francisco, and New York. During the visit of the Prince of Wales to India, Mr. Mathews played for a month at Calcutta. Nothing pleased him better than the embodiment of perpetual motion. Like "Young Rapid," he loved to "keep moving"—it kept him, as he loved to say, from "crystallizing;" and he has had his wish, to "die in harness," for it was, as above stated, in the course of a professional tour in Lancashire that he caught the cold which ended in a fatal bronchial attack.

The writer met him a few weeks ago at Blackburn, full of vivacity and delighted with the quick appre-

ciation of Lancashire, as distinguished from the slower-witted Yorkshire audiences. On that occasion he was as communicative as ever of his views concerning the drama and other things, and over a midnight cigar expressed his unhesitating approbation of the acting and *mise en scène* at the Prince of Wales's and the Court Theatres. Although of such advanced age that his life formed a sort of theatrical bridge between past and present, from Liston to Toole, he was yet no worshipper of the past, but ever a man of the last hour, fully abreast of the present and ever hopeful of the future.

Without assigning the highest histrionic honours to Mr. Mathews, it may perhaps be affirmed that no single Englishman of our time has contributed so largely to the innocent mirth of his countrymen. From the night when he made his first formal bow as George Rattleton to his last fatal tour with "My Awful Dad," a period of forty-three years, he has been a prime favourite on the stage and off the stage. As an actor, his exquisite airiness and sprightliness made him unapproachable in his own domain of light and eccentric comedy; as a man, he was beloved, not only for his goodness of heart and unvarying kindness of manner, but also for that charming vivacity which rendered him to the day of his last illness the most delightful and inspiring of all possible companions.

A Sheffield Athletic.

SOME one, in writing of the English people, said they were a nation who took their pleasure sadly. If that personage had been present as a spectator at the Queen's Grounds foot-races, Sheffield, a few days since, he would have been ready to endorse his statement, and have it printed in letters six feet high; for he would have gazed upon some five or six thousand men and boys wading about through a thick paste of mud, while almost without cessation the dense black clouds poured down a heavy rain.

Nature certainly tried to vary her proceedings by changing the size of the rain from the well-known cats' and dogs' pattern to that of the insidious small or searching dust-shot shower which so cleverly searches out the weak points of a man's protective armour of clothing, and setting umbrellas at defiance, curls beneath, and soaks a person to the skin. There was a little fleeing for shelter at first, but after a short time people seemed to arrive at a state of feeling that they could get no wetter, and, in stolid fashion, turned up their coat collars and seemed to bid the rain do its worst. To be strictly impartial to the ungenial weather, it did do its worst, and lost no time about its task. Umbrellas were there in plenty; and at times a spectator gazed upon the crowd, so densely packed at the end and sides of the ground, as upon one of the phalanxes of a Greek or Roman army advancing to an attack under shelter of its many shields, though in this case the wet showers of arrows of the enemy were not repelled, only condensed, to run trickling down in streams from the points around.

The moisture of the elements seemed to have its effect upon the crowd, which was so saturated that

no drinking seemed to be in progress; on the contrary, eating was in favour, and the proprietor of a huge locomotive-like potato-can drove a brisk trade, his glowing fire proving quite an attraction to saturated lads. Wet piemen, too, with repeated and false assertions of their wares being "all hot," sold readily, the popular taste seeming to require also a supply of dubious-looking gravy, out of a tin can, poured into the top of the patty, and a dash of relish from a bottle. Lemon drops, and similar sweets, were being sold; but everything looked damp, dreary, and sticky. Evidently from a desire to prohibit gambling, the management had plastered large bills upon the walls saying "Pitch and toss strictly prohibited;" while, evidently under the impression that light-fingered gentry might be present, another set of posting-bills read to this effect—"Gentlemen, take care of your watches."

But though there was no pitch and toss, no card trick, or any of the ordinary chance games so common at race meetings, the ground literally reeked, so to speak, with gambling of a scarcely less questionable nature. Cries rose on all sides, amongst the elbowing and noisy crowd, of "Three to one I name the winner of this heat," "Three to one, bar one," and the like; and in the intervals of the races excited knots of men were gathered together, regardless of the rain, as arrangements were made for the transfer of coin from pocket to pocket, according to how the race was run. Boys of from twelve or fourteen years of age were quite as busy as the elders they aped; and pence and sixpences were staked or put upon this or that favourite, after a certain amount of squabbling and expressed doubt as to the trustworthiness of the recipient of the stakes.

The time dragged wearily on, for it was very late before the races began; but at last a large bell, painted red, sent forth its clamorous sounds, with the pleasing effect of drowning a little of the foul language floating about over the heads of the crowd, the heaviness of the atmosphere probably keeping it down, in company with the rather unsavoury scents that affect large gatherings of unparticular people upon whom the rain comes raining down. The loud buzzing of voices began to rise louder into a murmurous roar, and what looked like a series of scuffles ensued; but they were only of a good-humoured kind, consequent upon a number of men coming upon the ground carrying armfuls of dry straw, to be attacked by hundreds, every one eager to get a handful upon which to sit while the races went on.

The noise of betting increased in power, and money was seen to be pretty readily staked. The reserved people, who, by the purchase of a scarlet ticket for a couple of shillings, were privileged to be within the posts and chains that kept back the greater portion of the people, sat down in front, and then loud cheers announced the appearance of first one and then another of the runners; while men and boys with cards eagerly marked with pins the names of the various favourites. Then, emerging from the crowd by the building near the gate, could be seen, closely attended by their trainers, and standing out prominently from their want of costume, the heroes of the day.

The reader must bear with us when we describe

this preparatory state of costume, which reminded one of the African King in an open uniform coat, and nothing else, inasmuch as it consisted merely of an ordinary white jersey and a cap and pair of racing shoes, in which the runners went gingerly down the black and muddy course in a peculiar springy fashion, as if every muscle was of India rubber, so easily did their feet rise and fall. Reaching the starting point, each man gave his legs a stretch, starting off and going at full speed for forty or fifty yards, as in a preliminary gallop on a racecourse, then back to the neighbourhood of the starting point, where the very slight clothing already worn was dispensed with, and the runners stood out almost perfectly nude, to a man fine specimens of human nature, with every muscle starting prominently from their clear skins—muscles that seemed gathered together in great sheaves about the shoulders and haunches, while from the knee downward they were remarkably fine and small.

In fact, any artist would have gloried in having them for models, and fancied that he was gazing on the youths of the classic arena, about to do battle for one of the antique prizes—to wit, a wreath of laurels to crown their brows. In every turn of their limbs, absurd though it may seem to speak so of an ordinary working man, there was absolute grace; and it was impossible not to feel envy of such perfection of human form. While the spectator might have been wondering why it was that the muscles of the calf of the leg were not more largely developed, as in the running footmen of the past, the trainers of the men were busily at work rubbing down and chafing their pupils, presumably to remove every trace of stiffness from the pliable sinews. In some cases this friction was administered with the hand, in others with a rough towel, what time this last application seemed most necessary, for the rain kept falling fast.

At last, however, the trainer's work was done; each competitor treated himself to some fluid from a bottle, whether stimulant or refreshing it is impossible to say, more than that while the contents of some bottles was white, that of others was red. The starters pointed out to each man his place, according to the rules of the handicap, some having a position a quarter, half, or even a yard in advance of their competitors. In one case a good runner was placed quite two yards in the rear. The starting point was marked by a nail driven into the ground, against which the runner placed his left foot, while, to ensure firm footing and no slip, the right foot was placed some distance in the rear, in a hole trampled out of the mud.

Then came an attitude struck by each man that was really fine, and strikingly resembling that of a famous statue of the ancient Greeks—namely, the "Discobolus." To those not familiar with the figure, it may be said that the statue is represented stooping forward, perfectly poised upon its feet, with one arm outstretched to its full extent forward, while the other is as far in the rear, holding a disc, or quoit, to be hurled into space. So in this case the men stood ready, classic, and the surroundings and the falling rain were forgotten in the grace of the attitudes as they awaited the signal, not to hurl a

quoit, but to launch forward themselves. There was no delay now, for the starter, some distance behind, stood ready, pistol in hand, held down to fire. There was the flash, the report, and with a simultaneous bound away darted the runners with wonderful rapidity, the course of each clear before him, being separated from that of his fellow by a tightly-stretched cord.

As the white, glistening figures skimmed along, clearly seen over the bare, black, muddy earth, with an ever-increasing yell arising from thousands of throats on either side, they seemed like prisoners in the good old American times running the gauntlet through the serried ranks of some huge tribe of savages, spurred by fear to strain every muscle to save their lives. Cheers, names, strange epithets, oaths, curses, yells, all blend in those few exciting moments into one strange roar, rising in *crescendo* till the foremost man breasts a white line at the winning-post, carrying the frail thread with him as he continues his headlong speed, and in some cases only checks himself at the fence at the end. This alone prevents him from throwing himself into the arms of the enthusiastic crowd, who are roaring themselves hoarse with delight or the reverse, as the various individuals have won or lost; for, unfortunately, the interest has not been centred in the prowess of the men or their brave efforts, but upon the pounds, shillings, and pence at issue.

Meanwhile the runners, with skins glistening with perspiration and rain, flanks heaving, and the action of the heart plainly seen throbbing painfully against the white skin, lips parted and panting for breath, eyes dilated, and the lower limbs bespattered with black mud, are hurried through the crowd to the shed appointed for the dressing-room; and the crowd floods the course, for the heat is over.

To the non-professional reader it may be intimated that these handicap races are run in heats—that is to say, a series of races are run till all the unsuccessful runners are weeded out, this lasting for the two days; the grand *finale*, consisting of a competition between the four winners of the races that have gone before. The handicapping is the calculation of each man's particular powers, and the apportionment of a yard or two of start, according to his demerits; and this one race that has been, however inadequately, described, is a fair specimen of those that have gone before, the competitors being in each case three or four, according to circumstances—four competing for the final race, which was won by a man who seemed to start a couple or three yards in the rear, but gained ground so rapidly in the short course that, had there been space, he would far have outstripped his pursuers. As it was, seen by one who witnessed from a medial position start and finish, he seemed to win by about a foot.

In the preceding races, however, it was too plainly evident that there were men who seemed to what a sporting man would call "run dark"—that is to say, did not put forth their full energies, but allowed themselves to be beaten without a supreme effort in the final struggle; and this, to a looker-on, seemed like the index to the bane of the whole proceedings. The men were not running for the honour of the

thing in a friendly competition of skill and muscle, as in our cricket matches, but to win or lose as the bets laid upon them might prove beneficial. In fact, to use a coarse but honest old English phrase, the whole affair "stank in the nostrils" of the tap-room, low gambling, and blackguardism.

What ought to be the outcome of manly athleticism, a thing to be encouraged for its health-giving properties amongst those who spend their days at wheel, furnace, or in pit, has been seized upon and degraded—training to an undue extent insisted upon, and simple, manly competitions turned into "professional" business for the commonest money-winning ends.

There are few things which conduce more to the development of health and muscular activity than the moderate indulgence in out-door sports, and such straightforward and non-professional training as a man might regulate for himself; while wrestling, walking, running, and the like, might be indulged in at holiday times with beneficial effect, instead of degrading and injuring the competitors by over-exertion, and the vitiated condition of low-class gambling to which these sports have been in latter times reduced.

Nothing could have been finer of its kind than the race itself: it was full of excitement in the gallant efforts of the straightforward runners, and there were many present whose hearts beat high and cheeks glowed as the competitors bounded along; but somehow or another running has, by the acts of those who mingle with the sport, been degraded into a state that is infamous. And it is not merely so in Sheffield, but in North London at the Agricultural Hall, where the late competitions, and feats of Weston, Gale, and others, were the signal for the gathering together of all the ruffianism of the great city, till the very building reeked with foul oaths and blasphemies.

Surely the time has come for placing our manly sports and pastimes upon a better footing. To attempt to abolish them would be monstrous—a proceeding against which the heart of every Englishman would rebel; but why should they be made leprous with such foul surroundings? But the other day many thousands could gather at Lord's Cricket Ground, London, and gaze with bated breath at the efforts made, and the various fluctuations of the exciting game in which Great Britain's youngest sons, "The Australians," newly come to our shores, gave their elder brothers, the pick of England's cricketers, with W. G. Grace at their head, such a thrashing as will never be forgotten in the annals of our sports.

There was no need for gambling there—the brave efforts of the men themselves were the attraction; and so might it have been here at the handicap races, for nothing could have been braver, finer, or more stirring than some of the rushes at the finish.

Englishmen are justly proud of their prowess, and of their strength and sustaining powers. Let them by all means go on, train in moderation, and compete in manly struggles of this kind, which have their use in elevating as much as the wretched gambling degrades.

Love or Friendship?

A SULTRY summer's evening, with the last roseate tints departing unwillingly from the fleecy clouds scattered over the heavens; the pale stars faintly twinkling here and there in the gradually deepening blue; not the faintest breeze to stir the leaves of the trees.

Slowly among the drooping flowers in a garden sauntered two figures—the tall, stalwart form of a man, and the slight, graceful one of a girl, both in the flush of youth and health. The time and scene were romantic, and who could be surprised that the softly-uttered words were of love—words from the heart—which could not have been spoken in the life and light of day, but now drawn forth by the surrounding influences of the hour.

For some time their feet pressed the soft turf, tracing and retracing their footsteps; and then, stopping suddenly, the girl raised her face, and looked at her companion with wistful eyes.

She was very beautiful, with a kind of beauty that is rare in England, having a clear, warm complexion, large dark eyes, whose colour it was difficult to tell, fringed by unusually long black lashes, and a mouth perfectly formed as that of some Greek statue.

"Maurice," she said, in a low, sweet voice, "are you contented? Are you happy, and satisfied?"

"Yes, darling. Why?"

"Because, when I see the way in which you look at me sometimes, I feel as if it is not fair, and that I do not give you enough in return for your love. I like you, and respect you, as I do no one else; but I know I do not feel towards you as you do to me. I cannot understand the kind of affection you bestow on me, but it is very different from mine for you. I wonder that you are satisfied."

The young man's tone was grave, as he replied—

"Nita, you have told me there is no other you prefer to me. That is true?"

"Indeed it is."

"Then I am more than content. I should be ungrateful if I were not. It is getting damp, love; you must not stay out longer. But one thing more I want to say before we go in. You know my friend, Warne Chester, was to come and stay with us at Elmsland Park: he is coming down next week, and, of course, I shall bring him up here, with your mother's permission, to introduce him to you and your sisters. I wish very much he would take a fancy to one of them; to get married and settle down would be the best thing that could happen to him. I want you to like him, Nita, but you must be prepared to find him rather odd; he is so silent and grave, almost melancholy, the result probably of his lonely life. He has no near relations living, poor fellow, except an uncle, who dwells at the antipodes, I believe."

"I shall be sure to like him. He must be nice, or he would not be a friend of yours."

A little longer, and they went into the house—to the light and brightness and merry voices, ready with jests at their expense, to which Maurice gave laughing rejoinders, while fleeting blushes sprang into Nita's cheek. Juanita, her name was, for her

mother, who was Italian, had called this one daughter after a friend in her native Italy.

Warne Chester made his appearance on the day appointed, and was received affectionately by his friend, Maurice Woodford, and cordially by the latter's parents, who were always ready to give a warm welcome to any friend of his; for Maurice could do no wrong in their eyes, being an only child, and an unusually good son, as sons go in these progressive days.

The time glided away, and Warne was introduced to Juanita and her family, and became on very good terms with them all before the period of his return to town arrived.

It was the last night of his visit, and the two young men sat by the open window of Warne's room, smoking, and indulging in a confidential chat, long after the other members of the household had retired to rest.

"And now, Warne," said Maurice, "after a fortnight's acquaintance, tell me what you think of Juanita."

The other puffed away in silence for a few minutes. "She is handsome," he said, at last, slowly, and, it seemed, with reluctance.

"Is that all?" said Maurice, disappointed. "Do you think she is nothing more than that?"

"Seems a very nice, lady-like girl."

Maurice said no more just then, but looked out thoughtfully at the moon, whose rays came full on the dark, crisp hair, and grave, refined countenance of his friend, making him appear pallid and colourless as marble.

"I am sorry you don't seem to like her," said Maurice, presently. "I counted on your sympathy."

"You have it," returned Warne, leaning forward suddenly, and laying his hand with an affectionate pressure on the other's knee. "Maurice, old fellow, I think she is all, and more than all, that you described her. I hope, nay, I am sure, that you will be very happy."

Their hands met in a silent grasp, and both were thoughtful for a time.

"When is the marriage to take place?" asked Chester, then.

"Not till next summer. Warne, you must come down again soon, and become better acquainted with the Eversleighs."

Warne shook his head decisively.

"Thanks, but no; I'm afraid I shall not be able to do so any more at present. I must be content with seeing you when you run up to town."

"At all events, you will see them in the winter, for they always spend three months at least at their London house there; and, of course, I shall be up a good deal too."

"You must quarter yourself with me, old fellow. I shall be only too glad to have you, for it is most awfully dull sometimes, and gives me the blues till I feel ready to—"

"What?"

"Oh, to get married, or do anything equally desperate."

"Is that what you were going to say? You looked terribly in earnest, Warne. But, to change the sub-

ject, what is your opinion of Emily and Minnie Eversleigh?"

"I don't know. Never thought about it. Very much like other girls, I should say."

Maurice looked at him curiously.

"Why don't you follow my example, Chester? Come, confess, old fellow, you don't leave here as heart-whole as when you came?"

A sudden dark flush, scarcely perceptible in the moonlight, mounted to Warne Chester's forehead; and, throwing the end of his cigar from the window, he rose hastily.

"Every one is not as susceptible as you are," he said, lightly; "and now, if you have no objection, I am going to bed."

"I take the hint, and am off. Good night."

And Maurice quitted him, to seek his own apartment. His friend, left to himself, slowly paced the room for a time, and ended by returning to his seat by the window. For a time the moon's soft light fell on the motionless figure with contracted brows, and eyes fixed on vacancy; then, as she sank lower and lower, the room was left in darkness, save for the faint light emitted by the gas, which was turned very low, the stars twinkled brightly for hours, then began to grow pale as the first faint streaks of dawn appeared, when Warne, raising his face from the hands that had covered it, saw that night was beginning to give place to day. He sought his bed at last, and, falling into an exhausted slumber, dreamed of being married, and his bride was Juanita.

Autumn came and went, and winter found the Eversleighs in London, Nita and her sisters thoroughly enjoying the excitement and gaiety of town life, after the long, quiet months passed in the country.

Maurice Woodford was in town, too, staying with his friend, and in consequence Warne often met the Eversleighs. He at first strongly resisted Maurice's desire to make them better acquainted, but succumbed at last, for his own feelings and wishes took Maurice's part, and he stifled other thoughts with the reflection that no one would suffer but himself.

But as time went on he became somewhat shaken in this opinion; for the thought would thrust itself on him that the happiness of two others might be perilled by his present behaviour; and when Maurice had left him again to the pleasures of solitude, he made another effort, and stayed away for nearly a fortnight from the house whither his inclinations would have led him. However, his own society was not enlivening; and he stood one evening looking doubtfully at a card of invitation to a ball, which had lain on his table some days. Should he go, or should he not? They—*she*—would be there.

For some time he stood irresolute, but eventually he decided that just this once he would go, and then he would see the Eversleighs no more.

Nita and her sisters were there; he singled them out almost as soon as he entered the room, and his heart gave a wild throb of joy, which feeling was changed to one of pain, almost of remorse, as his eyes, roaming round in search of familiar faces, fell upon Maurice Woodford, flushed and smiling—the very ideal of a handsome, fair young Englishman

enjoying perfect health and good spirits, without a care line on his brow.

"How happy he looks!" thought Warne; and he sighed.

Then his glance returned to Juanita, and a temptation with which he had struggled long, and that he had vanquished for a time, returned with redoubled force. He stood for a second hesitating, and then his mind was made up.

"I will do it," he said to himself. "I will know to-night whether she returns my love. Why should I consider Maurice? He has everything—I nothing."

Something—some better feeling in his heart—made a faint attempt to be heard, suggesting that the act he meditated would be a grievous wrong to a friend who trusted and believed in him entirely; but he stifled it, and mingled in the throng.

Maurice sought to speak to him more than once; but he avoided him so evidently that the other could not fail to see it, and, pained and surprised, gave up the attempt.

Meanwhile Juanita, when she saw Warne Chester talking to some ladies at a little distance, started, and felt the blood recede from her face and then return with a rush, to flush it brightly. She hated and despised herself for it, and endeavoured to conceal from herself the fact that his presence disturbed and agitated her, turning to talk to Maurice, and determining not even to give a glance in Warne's direction.

For some time she saw nothing of him, and, in spite of herself, she could not help wondering whether he was keeping out of her way on purpose, when, as she was seated, after a waltz with Maurice, who had left her unwillingly to seek his next partner, a voice, addressing her, made her raise her head. Her eyes fell again directly before the earnest gaze they encountered, and the bright colour mounted to her cheek.

"Surely, Miss Eversleigh," said Warne, "you do not attempt to sit through this dance. May I have the pleasure?"

She refused at first, but her resolution melted as he begged her to change her mind, and she was soon whirling round with him smoothly and lightly; for Warne danced well, and skilfully avoided all collisions. At last she said "Stop," and he gave her his arm to lead her to a seat.

"Let us go in here," as the door of the conservatory displayed a vista of cool green leaves and dropping waters. They entered, and sat down side by side, in silence.

Maurice, when his partner was tired, took her to a seat, and, staying near her no longer than politeness demanded, looked about for Nita, but she was nowhere to be seen; and at that moment he was seized and taken captive by an acquaintance, who took him to be introduced to his wife and daughters, suggesting that one of the latter was not engaged for the next dance in a way that left the young man no alternative but putting his name down on her programme.

He would not have gone through that quadrille so calmly could he have had an idea of what was going on not far from him.

Juanita was sitting with her face hidden in her

small, shapely hands, and Warne, standing before her, was uttering passionate words of love, interrupted more than once by a piteous entreaty to him to be silent from the girl, who was trembling and shrinking from him.

"I cannot help it, Miss Eversleigh—I must speak. Nita, I should never have dared to say what I have said to you, if I had not felt sure that you did not love Maurice Woodford—that your heart was still in your own keeping, to give where you would. Tell me, was I right?" he asked, suddenly sitting down beside her, and drawing down one hand from her face, to hold it in his own. As he received no answer, he continued, more earnestly, "Speak to me, Juanita. Tell me that you love him, and are happy in the prospect of being united to him, and I will ask your forgiveness for my wild words, and leave you."

Juanita raised her eyes to his for a brief minute, but it was long enough for him to see in their dark depths what made him draw her to his breast.

For an instant she allowed her head to rest there, and then started from him, and, rising to her feet, looked wildly at him.

"Oh, what have I done—what have I done?" And she pressed her hands to her eyes, before confronting him, pale and calm. "You forget, Mr. Chester, that I am engaged to Maurice Woodford. Will you take me back to my friends?"

He obeyed without a word. The conviction that she did return his love filled him with gladness, and there was no room for any other thought in his mind, until, some time later, as he stood alone, watching the dancers with a preoccupied air, Maurice approached him with extended hand.

"Good-night, Warne, I am going. It's nearly four, and the Eversleighs left a quarter of an hour ago."

Warne coloured high, and looked at him in some embarrassment; then with a hasty "good night," but without touching the proffered hand, he turned and left him. His friend stood motionless at first with astonishment, and then following, took his arm, and drew him reluctantly from the room.

"Come, Chester, you are going home, and so am I; so we may as well walk together as far as our separate destinations permit."

They were soon in the street together, walking briskly through the frosty air, in silence at first, which was broken presently by Woodford.

"I want to know what is the meaning of this, old boy. What has come over you to-night? You have avoided me all the evening. Have I done anything to offend you? Because, if so, I wish you would say so plainly, and give me a chance to vindicate myself. I can't understand you at all."

There was a pause, when, an empty Hansom passing, Warne hailed it.

"I'm tired," he said, abruptly; "so I may as well cab the rest of the distance. Good night."

And he sprang in without any further leave-taking, leaving Maurice to pursue his way alone, puzzled, and a good deal vexed at the repulse he had received.

"I shall leave him to come round by himself," he thought. "I certainly shall not ask for an explanation again."

Warne paced his room that night a long while before he went to bed, his thoughts in a whirl; but one reflection felt through all: Juanita loved him! She might possibly be his yet. But Maurice? He had wronged him, and deserved his contempt; and, knowing this, he had not been able to take the hand extended in friendship. And with this came a memory of the past. He saw an empty school-room—empty, that is, of its usual occupants—save for one boy, who sat with his head leaning against a desk in an attitude of deep dejection. The other boys were all departing for the holidays, but he had no home to go to, and must stay there. As he sat there, a solitary tear stealing down his cheek, a hand was laid gently on his shoulder, and he looked up, to meet the sympathetic gaze of a fair, frank, open-faced lad of his own age. This latter gradually drew his troubles from him.

"No friends!" said he. "Let us be friends, then, Chester; and then you will have *one*, at all events. And you must come and stop with me. I'll settle it."

Ever since that time Maurice had sought him out, put up with his fits of ill-temper, cheered him in his despondent moods, and been a friend to him in the truest sense of the word. As this came back to Warne now, he felt conscience-stricken and remorseful.

At last his ideas began to take a defined shape. He would do what he could to atone for his fault. It would be best to go away, that there might be no fear of the temptation being repeated—the farther away the better. And then, perhaps, years hence, when he could see Nita Maurice's wife without a pang, he might return to England.

"And that," thought he, "is equal to saying I will return no more; for I could not see her his, and yet not hate him."

He had no difficulty in deciding where to go, for he had an uncle in Singapore who held some Government office; and this old man, who was a widower, without children, had often asked him in his letters to join him out there. But Warne had never liked the idea, his impressions of this uncle, the only time they had met, having been very unfavourable. However, to him he would go, and leave the only two people he really cared for for ever. He would not even see Maurice again to bid him farewell, lest his surprise and pain should make his resolution harder to keep, or tempt him to disclose the reason of this step.

Having made up his mind unchangeably, he lay down to sleep. Morning found him pale, indeed, but resolved; and he immediately began to make preparations for departure. One day he went down into the country, and wandered about till he was tired in the lanes and picturesque roads near Maurice's home, taking a last look at the house where he had first seen Juanita, and photographing the snowy English landscape on his mind, that he might remember it when he was far away.

A fortnight later, he was on board a steamer starting from Marseilles, and bound for Singapore. He had written to Maurice from Marseilles.

Maurice had been making up his mind to go and see Warne, putting his pride out of sight, when he

received this letter, to his great surprise. It ran thus:—

"DEAR MAURICE—I have at last decided to join my uncle at Singapore, and when you receive this shall be on the route. I may never return to England, or, at all events, not for some years. You have my heartfelt wishes for your happiness.—Yours ever,
"WARNE CHESTER."

That was all. Not a word as to why he went, nor any explanation of his strange behaviour at their last meeting; and when the young man had recovered from his astonishment, he felt bitterly disappointed and hurt.

"Gone! How could he, without a farewell? I could not have done so in his place, had he offended me ever so deeply. It is very unaccountable."

So thought Maurice then; but a time came before long when it ceased to seem strange that his friend had avoided him, and when the riddle of his sudden departure was solved by an event that almost made a shipwreck of his life.

Ere five weeks had passed Warne Chester was in Singapore, to find his uncle dying, and his hopes in that quarter doomed to disappointment. However, he temporarily forgot his own trouble in ministering to the last hours of his fever-stricken relative, who had no friends near him. All was over in two or three days; the old man was laid in his grave, and his nephew found himself alone in a tropical clime, divided by thousands of miles from every one he knew, without an idea where to go or what to do.

After he had seen the remains of his uncle placed in their last resting-place, he wandered about, feeling giddy, confused, and unable to collect his thoughts, until the conviction grew upon him that he must be ill; and then he retraced his steps, and instinctively sought the house he had so lately left. The next day he was raving in the height of a dangerous fever, the same that had concluded the old and worn out life, and that now struggled for the victory over the young and vigorous one, which had not yet seen twenty-five summers. His attendant was an old Malay woman, who had faithfully nursed his uncle; but her kindness received no gratitude from Warne, who was unconscious of everything for a period, till one day when he opened his eyes, for them to fall on Maurice Woodford, sitting by the bedside, with his face hidden in his hands.

He lay quite still, and tried to think where he was, and how he came to be lying in a darkened room, oppressively hot, and feeling so weak as to be unable to lift an arm. The unfamiliar aspect of the apartment, the mosquito curtains to the bed, the oppressive atmosphere, and the despondent figure, puzzled him at first; but by degrees memory returned, and he understood all but one thing, the presence of his friend. "Was he really Maurice?" he wondered, or was he but another phantom of the brain, like the many shadowy forms that had haunted him of late?

This doubt was put to flight by Maurice's raising his head to look at him, and starting violently at seeing the hollow, dark eyes fixed on him, with the light of reason in them.

"Warne?" he said, softly.

"Maurice, can it be you, and here?" was the

answer, in a voice that the utterer hardly knew for his own.

"Yes; I will tell you how and why presently."

Maurice then rose to administer some stimulating preparation that stood ready for use, with the gentleness of a woman. This done, he resumed his seat, and took his friend's hand in his.

"Now explain," said Warne, in a scarcely audible tone.

"Not yet; wait till you are stronger," Maurice began.

But this was received with a slight but decided shake of the head, and a motion of the lips that said, "Now or never."

"Joy never kills," thought Maurice; and after a minute of hesitation, he replied, quietly, "I know all, Warne. She told me how it was as soon as I told her you were gone. I understood you then. I followed you out by the next steamer, for I thought perhaps a letter might not bring you. My dear old boy, I cannot tell you how glad I am I came."

There was a pause, during which their eyes met in a look which spoke as well as words.

"And I give her up to you; for she loves you," said Maurice, softly. "You must be quick and get well, and come back to her."

He looked at his friend for the emotion of pleasure that should come into the pale face, but saw only a quantity of limp, dark hair, once so crisp and bright; for Warne had turned his face away, to hide the tears that had started to his eyes. Presently he looked round.

"And you?" he asked, faintly.

"Oh, never mind me," said Maurice, hastily. "I care for you both too much to find my own happiness in your misery."

"Like you, Maurice; but it's no good. Say you forgive—everything; it's all over—for me—now."

A sudden thrill of dread shot through the other's heart; and he started up, and bent over him anxiously. Yes, it must be so. It would soon be all over, as he had said. He sat down on the edge of the bed.

"Forgive?" he said, huskily; "I do, if there is anything to forgive."

"Good-bye, then. Go back to her; she will be yours yet. I haven't done much good with my life—it seems so soon over—so short."

The last sentence was more to himself than to Maurice.

"There is time before you yet," said Maurice, trying to feel as if he spoke the truth.

"Not time—eternity," was the answer.

"Oh, Warne, Warne!"

A slight pressure from the hand was all that told him that cry was heard, and ere long Maurice knelt by the bed—alone.

He wrote to Juanita on his return to England, to break the news to her; he felt that he could not do it personally, and see the agony of grief she must feel for another, as she never would have done for him. When he did see her, there was a restraint between them that neither could shake off.

Nita's fair face still bore traces of the grief she had felt, and she was more womanly and subdued

than of old. To Maurice she seemed lovelier than ever; but he kept his feelings to himself, and spoke merely as a friend. For two years he kept silence, seeing her but seldom, and then he spoke.

"Nita," he said, "I love you more than ever I did in the old days, when we were so happy. Can you not give me as much of your heart as you did then?"

"More, far more," was the answer. "Maurice, I thought my heart was broken two years ago; but it has healed again, and is all yours if you want it."

He caught her to his breast, and in that moment all that he had suffered—his self-sacrifice, and the long, weary waiting—were more than repaid.

TOUCHING the origin of the pipe there are several legends, varying in detail, but all evidently springing from a common fountain-head. The belief is general that the Great Spirit gave the pipe out of his own hand. Standing on the precipice of the red pipe-stone rock, runs one legend, the Great Spirit broke from it a fragment. By simply turning it in his hand, he converted it into a huge pipe, which, after smoking, he proclaimed a symbol of peace among his children, declaring the pipe-stone common property. He then ordered peace pipes to be fashioned from it, and forbade the war club and the scalping knife to be lifted near it. At this date the pipe-stone quarries, from which some of the Indians get the stone for manufacturing their pipes, were regarded as holy, and were never approached without great ceremony. Father Charlevoix states that there is also a tradition that the calumet was a gift from the sun, and there are a number of authorities to prove that several of the Indian tribes looked upon the pipe-stone as the flesh of their ancestors. A favourite legend is, that during the time of a great flood the different tribes assembled on a bluff, where the pipe-stone alluded to is now found, but the waters rising, all were drowned and converted into clay, save a maiden, who, being borne to a greater eminence by an eagle, gave birth to twins. The intimate connection of the pipe with the devotional exercises of the aborigines for ages past is also made apparent by the idol pipes of the mound builders.—*What do we Smoke?*

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BY GEO. MANVILLE FENN.

CHAPTER IV.—ARTER THE DAWG.



ON the woman making her way slowly to the cellar stairs, Mr. Jarker stood looking after her; but as she mounted them he followed softly, and listened till he heard the rustle along the passage, when he slipped through the cellar, and caught sight of her from the rusty grating as she crossed the court, when he once more went back to the dark arch and looked about him.

All at once his keen eye caught sight of something upon the floor—a newly-burned scrap of match—

and, snatching it up, he held it to his cheek to try and detect whether it was dry or damp. It seemed to be dry; so, after once more going to the door, and from thence to the stairs, to make out whether he was sure to be free from interruption, he returned hastily, drew forth a tin match-box, lit a scrap of wax-candle from his pocket, and then, shading the light with his cap, and carefully examining the floor, he picked up three more tiny pieces of half-burned match, lying here and there amongst the blackened dirt and sawdust. These scraps he carefully placed in his pocket, along with the piece of candle, and then hurried out, with his lips drawn away from his teeth, and his face wearing a diabolically savage aspect. But the next moment he gave his head a shake, and stole softly up the stairs, muttering—

"It must have been arter tne dawg."

Mr. William Jarker walked out into the court, with his boots on now, and his hands very far down in his pockets, and then made his way into the Lane, where he paused, in doubt as to whether he should go to the right or to the left; but as in the latter direction there was a policeman, Mr. Jarker betook himself to the right, and made his way into the Strand, now nearly empty, while church-spire and chimney-pot stood out clear in the unsmoked morning air. But the street sweepers were busy, the butchers' carts from westward came rattling along, bound for Newgate-market; watercress girls tramped by from Farringdon, making up their dark-green bunches as they walked; while every now and then a red newspaper cart dashed by, with its universal budget for the various railway termini. London was waking again, the great heart was beating fast, and the streams of life beginning to ebb and flow through the street-veins of the City.

But all this affected Mr. Jarker very little. He only seemed interested at times during his walk, being apparently in a very contemplative mood. Once he half stopped, as a tall, dark, fierce-eyed

woman walked hastily by, in company with a slightly-formed girl; but they noticed him not, and were soon out of sight, while Mr. Jarker continued his walk, with eyes directed at the ground, as if he thought that, being an early bird, he must get the first peck at the worms—worms that might take the form of some valuable waif. However, not meeting with any reward from the earth, he turned his eyes heavenward, where he could see no waifs, but an occasional stray in the shape of a pigeon, darting across the clear strip of atmosphere above his head, or settling upon the housetop; and so much did these gentle birds attract his notice, that he would now and then stop, and inserting a couple of tolerably clean, soft, unworked fingers in his mouth, whistle to them.

For the pigeons are many in London, and at early morn single birds may be seen darting in swift flight like airy messengers; flocks may be seen to circle round their home, or cooing in company upon the tower of some lofty church—one of the many hidden amidst the labyrinths of bricks and mortar—cooing softly sweet notes, heard plainly now, but soon to be drowned in the roar of the busy streams of life ebbing and flowing through the streets; now but a gentle hum, as of a honey-seeking bee, but soon increasing in intensity as the bees swarm.

There was no help for it this time, for, suddenly turning a corner, Mr. Jarker came upon a sergeant and a dozen policemen walking with measured step, on their way to relieve those who had been on duty through the night.

"I'm gallussed!" muttered Mr. Jarker, trying to look unconcerned, and slouching on.

And it was observable that, though Mr. Jarker looked straight before him and whistled, the policemen, one and all, looked very hard at Mr. Jarker, as if they knew him and felt hurt at his pride; while one man was even seen to wink to himself, and smile a very peculiar, hard smile—the kind of smile only seen upon policemen's faces, and one that means so much that its interpretation would be a task of difficulty.

"I'm gallussed!" muttered Mr. Jarker, again, when he was well past the men in uniform; and then, apparently satisfied with the length of his morning walk, he took a short cut to make his way back to Bennett's-rents, while, upon thus once more having his thoughts directed homeward, he again muttered, "It must have been arter the dawg."

CHAPTER V.—WITH THE DRAGON'S TEETH.

IN the gloomiest part of that gloomy street called Carey, and in the darkest corner of his printing-office, sat Septimus Hardon. The dragon's teeth and their appurtenances lay around, but all thickly covered with that strange black dust peculiar to the region; the dust compounded of who can tell what, as it rests upon every ledge, and settles thickly upon every article in room or workshop, office or chamber. Business had not prospered with Septimus, though his place looked business-like, save for the animation that a few moving figures would have lent to it, while for position it was all that could be desired. But the star of Septimus Hardon was not in the ascendant. With the knowledge full upon him that he must work to keep

the wife and child he had taken to his breast upon leaving Somesham, he had adopted the trade which seemed most congenial from the little knowledge that he possessed; but as the years passed on, leaving him poorer, and with increased expenses, he grew hopeless, helpless, and, if it were possible, less fitted than ever for fighting his way amidst the busy throngs of the great city. At times, almost in despair, he would go forth into the streets of the busy hive and canvass for work; but he always carried with him an atmosphere of his own—so quiet, strange, and retiring a manner, that his very appearance invited either pity or rebuff; and often and often, when tired out, he would return to his wife for the comfort that she, grown more sickly than ever, could ill afford to give.

But Septimus seldom complained, and there was always a pleasant smile for Lucy Grey, now grown a blooming girl, the mainstay of the family for cheerfulness, and the constant attendant of her invalid mother; and, in spite of her years, almost taking the place of parent to the two children, the fruit of Septimus Hardon's marriage.

And now, after long years of struggling, Septimus sat thinking of the state of his affairs, of the rent he had to make up, and the silence of his father, in spite of the many humble appeals that he had made to him for help. Muttering and calculating, with a piece of paper and a pencil, he suddenly stopped short, for he saw that he was not alone, and shuffling off his high stool, he hurried towards the new-comer, in the hope that some solicitor had sent orders for some large amount of work, or that, better still, an estimate was wanted for a new magazine.

"Any chance of a job, sir?" said the new-comer, who might have been Septimus Hardon twenty years older, and more shabby. There was "old compositor" oozing out of him at every corner, and the corners in his person were many; he smelt of stale tobacco smoke, and he was taking almost his last pinch of snuff out of a dirty piece of paper, with his long, lithe, active fingers, as Septimus Hardon approached him. A shabby black frock coat was buttoned tightly to his chin; his shiny black trousers had the gloss of age thick upon them; Wellington boots were upon his feet that rivalled his tall hat for dilapidations; old, fallow, dirty, and wild-looking, he was not the man a master would have employed, unless from some latent idea that he suited the district. "Any chance of a job, sir?"

Septimus Hardon shook his head and sighed, which was, to say the least of it, unbusiness-like.

The old man echoed the sigh, leaned one hand upon the case of type at his elbow, and began to finger the letters, bringing up the bright unused types from the bottom of the boxes. He then sighed again, took in at one glance the fittings of the office, and ended by fixing his eyes upon the owner.

"Might do a deal of work with all this, sir."

Septimus Hardon nodded drearily, and sighed again, instead of promptly ordering the man off his premises.

"Yes; should be glad of an hour's work or so, sir. Seems hard here in this world of ours that when a man's ready and willing to work he can't get it to do, sir—don't it?"

Septimus nodded, and looked hard at the man, thinking how his was, after all, the worse lot.

"I'm faint, sir," continued the old printer, "and hungry, and hard up."

And then he looked down at his clothes, with a dreary smile upon his grim, unshorn face.

"I would give you work with pleasure," said Septimus; "but I might as well close the office, for all that comes to my share."

The man scraped the last of his snuff out of the shabby piece of newspaper, and lost it all beneath his long, dirty finger and thumb nails; when, not to disappoint his itching organ, he ran a clean finger along a ledge where dust lay thick, and administered it to his nose in an absent way, snapped his fingers loudly to get rid of the residue, and then slowly turned to go; but, on reaching the door, he faced round again—

"If you'd stand an advance of a shilling, sir, I'd come honestly another time and work it out; I *am* hard up, sir, and no mistake."

Mistake there certainly was none; but shillings were then scarce things with Septimus Hardon. A shilling—the sum tossed carelessly to the cabman for a few hundred yards' ride—meant, perhaps, the dinner of himself and family; and he knew in his heart that the odds were very long against his ever seeing man or shilling again; but there was so great a knowledge of want in his heart that he could not bear to see it in others, and almost the last shilling in his pocket was slipped into the visitor's hand.

The old printer took the money with his trembling fingers, looked at it, then at the donor; tried to speak, but choked over it; and then, with something like a maundering tear in each eye, he shuffled out of the office, taking with him

The solicitor's work;

The magazine estimate; and, most needed of all, Septimus Hardon's shilling.

There was so little weight in the pocket before, that the shilling was not missed; and, in spite of the black look of his affairs, there was something in the act which made Septimus Hardon's heart feel light as his pocket, as, thrusting his papers into the desk and locking it, he went and stood before a piece of looking-glass, and stretched his face to take out the care-wrinkles, smiled two or three times to give a pleasant varnish to his countenance, and then, loudly humming a tune, he hurried up to the first-floor, where Mrs. Septimus, Lucy, and the children were located.

Carey-street was a most desirable place for residence or business, as any landlord would have told you, in the old days, before the houses I write of were carted away by contractors and huge law-courts threatened in their stead. Lucy Grey knew the place now by heart. There was generally something out of the common way to be seen there, in spite of the place being so retired and its echoes so seldom disturbed by carriages, unless by those of the judges, when coachmen and footmen thought it advisable to wash down the legal dust of the place by copious draughts of porter at the Barley Mow or the Blue Horse. The dust-cart—that hearse for bearing off the remains of many a dancing, merry, cheery fire—might be seen there in the morning;

and at every cloud of dust raised by the emptying of the fantail man's basket, scraps of parchment, and torn folios of cold, bitter cold, crabbed writing, were caught up by the fierce winds of the place, and away they went scudding down the street, to the amusement of Septimus Hardon's children; for the mocking wind tossed the scraps on high, as if to show how light and empty they were. Interesting words they were, too, mostly about "our client" and his "heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns;" while of a morning the man whom Septimus Hardon himself knew well as a class, "our client" himself, might be seen in the streets; now early in his suit—Chancery suit, perhaps—wrapped in it, and looking busy and important, glossy and shiny, and, on the whole, apparently liking it. Now with the suit old and shabby, with the pocket-holes frayed and worn with the passage in and out of papers—papers always without end—while the owner crept along, dejected and dismal as Septimus himself, ready at times to enter his office, and sit down and make him the repository of the fact that he hoped the Lord Chancellor or his Vice would give judgment next week. Now he went along, silent and thoughtful; now he brightened up and became energetic, and gesticulated to an audience composed of the apple-woman at the corner, who sat there beneath the lamp summer and winter, like some dowdy old hen in a nest, for her lower extremities were all tightly tucked in a worn sieve-basket.

"Our client" generally went into Carey-street to eat his sandwiches; now looking crumby, now crusty, as the case might be, while he paced irresolutely up and down, or round into the Lane or Portugal-street, or even into the Fields for a change, to gaze at the trees beyond those railings, upon every spike of which a disappointed or broken heart might be stuck by way of ornament. As before said, "our client" had generally plenty of papers with him; some yellow and frayed, some new, but all carefully tied with red tape, which by its friction has a wonderful effect upon black-kid gloves, soon wearing out the fingers, as the papers are untied in doorways for reference, while the tape string is held in the mouth.

"Our client" was decidedly the principal object of interest in Carey-street; but there were thin, clever, cold-looking lawyers; thin, cold, and underpaid clerks, blue-bag bearing; portly, thick clerks, warm, glossy, and gold-chained, red-bag bearing—bags gasping and choking fearfully with their contents—choking horribly with the papers thrust into them, sticking out of their very mouths; long-headed barristers, whose eyes seemed to have turned cold and oysterish—meaningless, and as if gazing within—men upon whose long heads briefs rained incessantly; men in gowns, men bewigged, and with the insignia of their rank put on all ways—straight, crooked, here awry, and there awry, with the frontal apex descending upon the nose, and the caudal beauty behind raised at right angles to display the undergrowth—black, brown, grey, or sandy—or perhaps resting upon the nape of the wearer's neck, with the tails beating a white powdery tune upon his back, like a hare's feet upon a tabor; shabby witnesses, shabby porters, shabby inhabitants; dirt

everywhere, and a sharp, gritty, pouncey dust flying before the wind to bring tears into the eyes.

Lucy Grey knew all this by heart, and so did Septimus Hardon's children—lessons learned from the windows, or during their walks, when Lucy showed them the wonders of the shops at hand, and that ever-banging, restless door where the shabby law writers went in and out, night and day; the three wigs resting upon as many blockheads—wooden blockheads—new, fresh, and cool for their future wearers; the works in the law booksellers', all bound in dismal paper, or Desert-of-Sahara-coloured leather—law-calf—Tidd on this, Todd on that, Equity Reports, Chancery Practice, Common Law, Statutes at Large, Justice of the Peace, Stone's Manual. Law everywhere: Simson, tin deed-box manufacturer; Bodgers, deeds copied; Screw, law writer; Bird, office furniture warehouse—valuations for probate; S. Hardon, legal and general printer; while, like a shade at the end of the street, stood the great hospital, where the wan faces of patients might be seen gazing up at the sky, towards where the clouds scudded before the wind, hurrying to be once more in the country. Away they went, each one a very chariot, bearing with it the thoughts of the prisoned ones—captives from sickness, or poverty, or business. There were faces here at the hospital that would smile, and heads that would nod to Septimus Hardon's little golden-haired children when Lucy held them up; when perchance the patient went back to sit upon some iron bedstead's edge, and tell some fellow-sufferer of the bright vision she had seen—a vision of angels in the legal desert.

With such surroundings, no one upon entering Septimus Hardon's rooms would have been surprised to see Mrs. Septimus careworn, and lying upon a shabby couch, and the children slight and fragile. The rooms were close, heavy, and dull; heavy-windowed, heavy-panelled, earthy-smelling, and cryptish, as though the dust of dead-and-gone suitors lay thick in the place. There was but little accommodation for the heavy rent he paid; and Septimus Hardon looked uneasily from face to face, crushing down the sorrowful thoughts that tried to rise; for in that close room there was not space for more than one complaining soul. Mrs. Septimus told of her troubles often enough, and Septimus felt that his task was to cheer. Still, it was hard work when he had to think of the landlord and the rent; the landlord who, when he complained of this said rent, told him to look at the situation—which Septimus Hardon did, and sighed; and then, by way of raising his spirits, took down and read the copies of the letters he had from time to time sent to his father, unanswered one and all; and then he sighed again, and wondered how it would all end.

CHAPTER VI.—A PAIR OF SHOES.

THIS is a world of change; but the time was when you could turn by St. Clement's Church, from the roar of the waves of life in the Strand, and make your way between a baked-potato can—perspiring violently in its efforts to supply the demands made upon it—and a tin of hot eels, steaming in a pasty mud; then under a gateway, past old-clothes shops and marine-store dealers, and thread your way

along between crooked, tumble-down houses, in dismal, fever-breeding lanes, which led you into the far-famed region of Lincoln's-inn, where law stared you in the face at every turn. It will, doubtless, behave in as barefaced a manner to you at the present day; but you will have to approach it by a different route, for the auctioneer's hammer has given those preliminary taps that herald the knocking down of a vast collection of the houses of old London. But take we the region as it was, with its frowsty abodes and their tenants. They are clipped away now; but in every direction, crowding in upon the great inns of court, were dilapidated houses, pressing upon it like miserable suitors asking for their rights, or like rags of the great legal gown. But it is a rare place is Lincoln's-inn—a place where the law is rampant, and the names of its disciples are piled in monuments upon the door-posts; a place where you may pick your legal adviser according to the length of your purse. The doors stand open, and the halls are cold, cheerless, and echoing; while the large carven keystone looks down at the entering client with its stony eyes, which seem to wink and ogle as the sly, sneering, tongue-thrusting image apparently chuckles at the folly of man. The cold shivers are always out in Lincoln's-inn, and they attack you the moment you enter the precincts; probably they are spirits of past-and-gone suitors, in past-and-gone suits, wandering to avenge themselves upon the legal fraternity by freezing the courage of litigants, and turning them back when about to perform that wholesale shovelling of an estate into the legal dust-cart known as "throwing it into Chancery." Cold stone posts stand at intervals along the sides of the square, looking, in their grey, deep misery, like to stripped and bare clients waiting for redress at their legal advisers' doors. A dreary place for an assignation, if your friend possesses not the virtue of punctuality; for the eye wanders in vain for some pleasant oasis where it may rest. You have not here in autumn those melancholy, washed-out flowers, the chrysanthemums of the Temple; but you may gaze through prison-like bars at soot-dusted grass, verdure apparently splashed with ink from the surrounding offices; at the trees, adapted by nature to the circumstances of their fate; for, as in the arctic zone the thinly-clad animals grow furry as a protection from the cold, so here, in this region of law costs and voluminous writing, the trees put forth sprigs and sprays of a sharp spiky nature—a compromise between porcupine penholders and a *chevaux de frise*—to enable them to set attack at defiance.

Enter one house here, and you would have found upon the ground-floor your Q.C. or Serjeant—Brother So-and-so as he is so affectionately called by the judge; upon the first-floor, your substantial firms of family solicitors, deep in title, lease, covenant, and tenancy in every form or shape—men who set such store by their knowledge that they dole it out to you at so much per dozen words—words adulterated with obsolete expressions repeated *ad nauseam*; while upon the second-floor you would have met with firms of sharp practitioners, ready for business in any shape; and, as elsewhere through the house, the names of the occupants were painted

upon the doors—black letters upon a parchment ground.

But the house in question was not entirely legal in its occupants, for if you had been ascending the stairs, before you had gone far, a loud sniff would have made you raise your head sharply towards the skylight, beneath which, sitting, or rather perched, upon the top balustrade, would have been visible the doughy, big, baby-like face of Mrs. Sims, strongly resembling, with the white muslin wings on either side, a fat-cheeked cherub, freshly settled after some ethereal flight.

Mrs. Sims was the lady who did for those gentlemen of the house who wanted doing for, took in parcels, answered bells, and was also well-known in the neighbourhood as a convenient party in times of sickness—being willing to nurse a bachelor gentlemen of the legal profession, or one of the poor fraternity of the rags around. She had stood at many a bedside, had Mrs. Sims, and seen the long sleep come to many a weary, broken-hearted suitor; and she had sniffed and sobbed at the recital of their miseries, offering the while such consolation as she could from the depths of a very simple, but very honest heart.

After another loud sniff, and a curtsy performed invisibly, except that the cherubic head was seen to bob out of sight, and then apparently re-perch itself upon the balustrade, Mrs. Sims would say "At home," or "Not at home," as the case might be. Then, as you left the staircase, the head would disappear, and, summer or winter, Mrs. Sims might be heard refreshing herself with a blow at the fire by means of a very creaky, asthmatic pair of bellows.

Mrs. Sims was busy, and had made visible the whole of her person, as, standing at the door, she pointed out into the square, calling the attention of one of *her* lodgers, as she termed them, to a passer-by.

"Here, you sir; fetch a cab—a four-wheeler," shouted the lodger. "No; confound your bird!—I don't want birds, I want a cab."

The person addressed was the inhabitant of Bennett's-rents—the big, slouchy, large-jawed gentleman, in a fur cap and a sleeved-waistcoat, already known to the reader. He carried a small birdcage, tied in a cotton handkerchief, beneath his arm, while another spotted handkerchief wrapped his bull-neck, where it was pinned with a silver-mounted Stanhope lens, which was apparently regarded as a rare jewel. Upon being first called, he commenced expatiating upon the qualities of the bird, whose cage-envelope he began to unfasten, until so unceremoniously checked by the gentleman who summoned him.

"You're a fine sort, you are," growled the man, as he went off in search of the cab; "and if I warn't as dry as sorduss, I'd see you funder afore I'd fetch your gallus cab, so now, then. My name's Jarker, chrissen William, that's about what my name is, stand or fall by it—come, now."

As nobody seemed disposed to "come, now," Mr. Jarker hastened his steps, and soon returned with the cab, placed his cage behind the hall-door, and then, under the direction of Mrs. Sims, fetched down portmanteau and bag, groaning and sighing beneath their weight, and raising up a smile of contempt

upon his employer's face as he watched the fellow's actions, and scanned his powerful development, and the idleness written so plainly upon his countenance. But soon the task was ended, the cab-door banged, Mrs. Sims had turned on a little more of her laughing-gas to brighten her features by way of valediction to the departing lodger, and then, as she sniffed loudly, the cab drove off, leaving Mr. Jarker spitting upon that curiosity, an honestly-earned sixpence, in his hand.

"How's the missus? why, she's okkard, and I don't s'pose you a-coming would do her any good; and she's a-going to spend a shillin' in ankerchers for some one as has a cold in her head, that's what she's a-goin' to do," said Mr. Jarker, with a grin at Mrs. Sims.

And then he watched the affronted dame as she sniffed her way upstairs; but before she had reached the second flight, Mr. Jarker had grinned again, drawing his lips back from his white teeth with a smile that more resembled a snarl.

Mr. William Jarker, bird-catcher, fancier of pigeons, and of anything else which came to his net, stood listening to the sniffs and receding footsteps of Mrs. Sims, placed the sixpence he had earned in the pocket of his tight corduroys, pulled off his large, flat, fur cap, and gave his head a scratch, thereby displaying a crop of hair which it would have been useless to attempt to brush or part, for it was decidedly short, and the barber who had last operated had not been careful, but left the said hair nicky and notchy in places. However, the style gave due prominence to the peculiar phrenological development of Mr. Jarker's bumps, while his ears stood out largely, and with an air that suggested cropping as an improvement to them as well, more especially since there was a great deal of the bulldog in his appearance.

Mr. Jarker replaced his cap, took his little bird-cage from behind the door, and was just moving off, when a barrister came out of one of the lower rooms in full legal costume, muttering loudly, and evidently reciting a part of the performance he was about to go through.

Upon hearing the door open, Mr. Jarker turned his head, and then gave an involuntary shudder as he moved off, while the counsel followed closely behind, wrapped in his brief, and at times talking loudly—

"Instead, m' lud, of the case being tried in this honourable court, m' lud, devoted as it is to civil causes, the defendant should be occupying the felon's dock at the Old Bailey, m' lud; for a more shameful case of robbery—"

"I'm gallussed!" muttered Mr. Jarker, quickening his steps, and perspiring profusely, as he gave a furtive glance over his shoulder at the barrister, still rehearsing—"I'm gallussed! It didn't oughter be allowed out in the public streets."

Mr. Jarker felt his nerves so disarranged in consequence of low diet, that after making his way out of the Inn, across Carey-street, and into the rags of the legal cloak—that is to say, into Bennett's-rents—he resolved to take advantage of there being a "public" at either end of the Rents, and, regardless of the whooping children who dashed by him, he

went in and had "three-ha'porth" of the celebrated cream gin advertised outside upon a blue board with golden legend. After which enricher of his milk of human kindness, Mr. Jarker wiped his mouth with the back of his hand as he passed through the swinging doors, hugged his cage against his ribs, muttered, "Didn't oughter be allowed out in the public streets," and then, forcing a way through a noisy tribe of children, he paused at No. 27 in the Rents—a dismal-looking old house, worse, perhaps, by broad daylight than in the early dawn, when some of its foulness had remained concealed. It had been a mansion once, in the days of the Jameses probably, when fresh air was a more abundant commodity in the City, and was not all used up long before it could penetrate so narrow a thoroughfare.

Mr. Jarker slowly tramped up flight after flight of stairs, till he came to the attic floor, when, without removing his hands from his pockets, he kicked open the badly-hung door, and entered the bare room.

"Oh, you're here agen, are yer?" he said, sulkily, to a dark, well-dressed woman, in black silk and fashionable bonnet, strangely out of place in the wretched room, whose other occupant was pale-faced, weary-looking Mrs. Jarker, whose crimply white hands betokened a very late acquaintanceship with the wash-tub by the steamy window. "Oh, you're here agen, are yer?" said Mr. Jarker.

"Yes, Bill," said Mrs. Jarker, timidly, every word she spoke seeming to flinch and dart out of reach of hearing almost before it was uttered. "Yes, Bill, she's come again, and we've been talking it over, and—and—and—if you wouldn't mind, Bill, I'd—"

"How much?" growled Mr. Jarker.

"Five shillings," said his wife, timidly—"five shillings a week."

"Taint enough," said Mr. Jarker. "It's worth six. Look at the trouble."

Mrs. Jarker looked from her husband to the stranger, and back again, and was about to speak, when her lord exclaimed, roughly—

"Shut up!"

The visitor's eyes flashed for a moment, and then she glanced hastily round the room, her gaze resting for a moment upon the ruffianly, bull-dog face of Jarker, and she hesitated; but another glance at the timid, gentle countenance of his wife seemed to reassure her, and she said, hoarsely, with her look fixed upon the flinching woman—

"I'll give you six."

"And if 'taint paid up reg'lar, I'm blest if I sha'n't chuck it outer winder, or somethin'; so look out," said Mr. Jarker.

The visitor's lips quivered; but, still gazing fixedly upon the woman, she said, in the same hoarse voice—

"I shall bring the money once a week."

"In advance, yer know," growled Mr. Jarker.

"Yes, yes; only be kind to it," exclaimed the visitor, with something like a sob, but without removing her eyes.

"Oh, ah! in course we will. We're the right sort here, aint we, Poll?" growled Mr. Jarker.

"Yes, Bill," said his wife, in a husky whisper.

"And now," said Mr. Bill Jarker, with what was

meant for a pleasant smile, but which consisted of the closing of his eyes and the display of his teeth—"and now, as we've made it all snug, you'll stand somethin'; that's what you'll do, aint it, now?"

Still without removing her eyes from the pale-faced woman before her, the visitor drew a shilling from a little bead-purse, and laid it upon the table, her lips now moving as if trying to form words for Mrs. Jarker to understand.

"Go away now, Bill," whispered she to her husband.

"What for?" growled Bill, untying the knots of his handkerchief with his teeth, to set his cage at liberty, and nearly frightening the soul out of the tiny, fluttering, panting body contained therein.

Then, by way of reply to a whisper, he sullenly took the shilling from the table, bit it, spat upon it, and spun it up, before depositing it in his pocket; made his way to the back part of the attic, where bird-cages and the paraphernalia of his profession lay thick, ascended a ladder to a trap in the ceiling, and then, only his legs visible as he stood upon one of the top rounds, Mr. Jarker, with half his body above the tiles, busied himself amongst his pigeons, and started them for a flight over the houses.

The next moment, after a hurried glance at the ceiling, where the light streamed down past the ruffian's legs, the visitor's face was seen to work, and, rising from her seat, she went down upon her knees before poor Mrs. Jarker, kissing her work-worn hands, and bathing them with the tears that streamed from her eyes.

"God—God bless you!" she whispered, passionately. "Oh, be kind to it!"

But Mrs. Jarker could not answer, for something swelling in her throat; and the next minute she too was weeping, with her head resting upon her visitor's shoulder.

This paroxysm of tears seemed to have its effect upon the visitor, for, forcing back her own emotion, she appeared more at ease within herself, as, gazing once more into the pale, worn, common face of the bird-catcher's wife, she kissed her in so loving and sisterly a way, that the tears flowed faster from Mrs. Jarker's eyes. And yet, knowing full well who was her visitor, Mrs. Jarker did not shudder, but rose from her chair, glancing timorously at the open trap, and then drew the stranger towards a box—a common deal box, with the blue-stained paper that had once covered it hanging here and there in rags.

She went upon her knees, and raised the creaking lid, when an impatient movement of the feet upon the ladder made her start up hastily and close the lid again. But a long, loud whistling from above showed her that Mr. Jarker was still busy with his birds; so once more raising the lid, the poor creature thrust her hand down to a well-known spot beneath the few rags of clothes the box contained, and brought out a pair of little, stained red boots, which she pressed passionately to her lips, the tears gushing from her eyes the while, and a broken hysterical wail burst from her overlaid breast. But it was checked instantly, for Jarker's feet scraped on the ladder, and the boots were hidden beneath the woman's apron; then the whist-

ling was heard again, and the little boots were brought forth once more.

A pair of tiny red boots, the only relic she had of something that was not—something that she had once warmed within her breast—the breast before now bruised and blackened by a ruffian hand, but beneath which was the same warm, God-implanted love for her offspring that glows in the bosom of the noblest of her sex.

For a moment or two the younger woman gazed in the other's eyes with a soft, tender, pitying look—a look in this case of true sympathy; and the hand of the lost rested lovingly upon Mrs. Jarker's breast, as she whispered softly—

"How old was it?"

"Only a twelvemonth," was the reply, followed by a moan. "But perhaps it was best—perhaps it was best."

The visitor's hand still rested upon the other's breast, and she was about to speak, when an impatient shuffle started both, for it seemed that Mr. Jarker was about to descend; but he came not. And now a look of ineffable sweetness and content came over the well-moulded features of the visitor. She was satisfied now respecting the step she was about to take; for Mrs. Jarker's heart had been laid open to her. A true chord of sympathy existed between them, and she could feel that her little one would be taken to a motherly breast, and protected—protected; but who, she asked herself, would injure one so tender and frail?

But there was no time for further communion between these motherly hearts, for a loud rasp on the ladder told that Mr. Jarker was descending; and the visitor prepared to leave.

"You've been a-pipin' again," growled Mr. Jarker to his wife, who had hastily concealed the boots—"pipin' about that 'ere kid as has gone; and a good thing too. Wot's the good, when here's another a-coming?" and he looked menacingly at the shivering woman. "I say," he continued to the visitor, who now stood at the door, "you'll pay up regular, and in advance?"

"Yes, yes!" she said, hoarsely, almost fiercely, as she turned to him with a steady, contemptuous look, which made the great brute shuffle about uneasily—"yes, yes, so long as I live."

And the next moment the door closed upon her retreating form.

"Long as you live? Yes; I should just think you will, or else there'll precious soon be a kid found at somebody's door, with the perlice, cuss 'em, taking the brat to the workus. And don't you pipe no more," he snarled to the trembling woman, who slowly retreated to the wash-tub. "A-taking of it to the workus, cuss 'em," muttered Mr. Jarker again, removing his fur cap, and passing his hand over his cropped head, as if the name of the police, and their probable future duty, had reminded him of former injuries. "Now then, you!" he shouted, as if calling his dog, and he threw the shilling upon the table—"d'yer hear?"

"Yes, Bill," said the woman, meekly, and hastily passing her hands over her dull red eyes before she turned to him the face from which all that was attractive had long since fled.

"Tripe," said Mr. Jarker.

"Yes, Bill," said his wife.

"Pipe and screw," growled Mr. Jarker.

"Yes, Bill," said the woman, hurriedly tying on a miserable bonnet.

"And here, you!"

"I wasn't going, Bill," said the woman, meekly.

"Who said you was?" growled the ruffian.

"Don't you be so sharp, now then. Now, where's that money?"

"What money, Bill?"

The next moment the ruffian had seized her by the front of her dress and dragged her to him, so that she went down upon her knees.

"Don't you try to put none of your games on me. What did she give you when I was out of sight?"

And he put his black face down close to hers, as, half from fear, half from bitterness, her lower lip worked as she tried to keep back the tears, and to answer; but no words would come.

"D'yer hear? What did she give yer?"

"Nothing, Bill," whispered the woman.

He looked at her fiercely; but though faded and lack-lustre, her eyes blenched not, but gave him back the same true, steady look that had always shone for him since—young, ignorant, ill-taught, weak—she had believed he cared for her, and she could be happy with him: not the first of Eve's daughters that have made the same mistake.

"Get up!" snarled Jarker, loosing his hold; and his wife rose hastily, without a word. "Pint of porter, with half-a-quartern of gin in it."

"Yes, Bill," she whispered, and drew on a washed-out shawl.

"And no fiddling, you know—put all the gin in."

"Yes, Bill," said the woman, hastily taking the shilling, and descending the creaking stairs to procure her lord's refreshments—tripe stewed, and gin and beer, being special weaknesses of his when in funds.

"Don't let her forget to bring some inguns, that's all," he muttered, as he listened to the retreating steps. He then crushed down the fire with the heel of his heavy boot, and, putting his hand in his waistcoat-pocket, his fingers came in contact with two or three scraps of burnt match, which he took out, looked at thoughtfully, and then burned. "She must have been arter the dawg," he muttered.

And walking to one of the lattice-windows, he opened it, and framed himself as he leaned out, with his arms resting upon the rotten sill, a splinter of which he picked off to chew. Then he gazed steadfastly across the court at the opposite window, which was hung round with bird-cages, whose occupants twittered sweetly, while one—a lark—seemed to fill the court with his joyous song.

This reminded Mr. Jarker of his own birds, and, stepping back growling, he looked to see if the little cages hung over his nets all contained water, which they did.

"And a blessed good job for her as they do!" he muttered, on finding that his wife had performed this duty. Then, walking again towards the front, he watched the opposite window, where he could see a pale, sallow face eagerly looking at the birds, while from behind came the sharp sound as of the

lash of a whip striking the floor, followed by the shrill yelp of a dog.

Mr. Jarker stood thoughtfully watching and listening, as if in doubt upon some particular subject; and, as he watched, he pulled out that ugly clasp-knife of his that he had opened a short time before in the cellar, and now, opening and closing it again, his brow lowered—that is, a trifle more than usual. But he seemed to grow easier in his mind, for he shut the knife with a snap, and thrust it into his pocket; and now he appeared to be moved by that spirit which prompts so many people who can hardly keep themselves to have dumb animals about their homes, probably for the reason that the dumb brutes are faithful, and friends are few. Who knows?

"I think I shall have a dawg," said Mr. Jarker to himself, as a louder yelp than usual rang across the court, when he shut the window, and went and stood gazing into the fire once more, till he heard the returning step of his wife, when he roused himself.

"Yes," said Mr. Jarker, half aloud, "I'll have a bull-pup."

The Beaver Abroad.

BY DR. ROBERT BROWN.

THE following I add as an appendix to the foregoing observations of my friend Mr. Green, whose opportunities for studying the animal were much superior to my own during my travels in North-west America, and whose account is valuable as being the plain unvarnished notes of a hunter—a narration of facts very familiar to him, written with no reference to preconceived notions or received theories. First, therefore, regarding the range of the beaver. It is found all over British Columbia, Oregon, Washington Territory, and even south to California and north to the limit of trees. It is not, however, found, as far as I can learn, in the Queen Charlotte Islands, but is abundant in Vancouver Island, though, curiously enough (in such a manner is history written), Colonel Colquhoun Grant, in his "Description of Vancouver Island," mentions that he has seen traces, and was not aware that the animal itself had been found. The fact of the matter is, he could have found abundance not far from his own door. Near Victoria, in Mr. Yales's Swamp, and in one near Dr. Tolmie's, are several beavers; and on the road to Cadborough Bay there are, in a small stream near where the road crosses, the remains of an old dam. In the interior they are almost everywhere abundant, and on the increase. In a swampy lake near the mouth of the Cowichan Lake we found many; and an extensive swamp near the entrance of the Puntledge Lake was a great stronghold. On Young's Creek, flowing into the same lake, were many dams. In the spring of 1866, when crossing the island from Fort Rupert to the head of Quatseeno Sound with some Indians, a great portion of our route lay among these beaver ponds and dams. All through this district beavers swarm. The camps of the Indians were full of them; and the women laid before us the daintiest pieces of the meat, or exhibited to their white visitor all sorts of

curiosities in the shape of foetal beavers and beavers' teeth, with which they were gambling, using marked ones in much the same manner as our dice. At the Hudson Bay Company's Fort we lived upon beaver during that spring—beaver roasted and beaver broiled; beaver tail and beaver joint; beaver morning, noon, and night! In regard to the beavers' houses, I am forced to come to the conclusion either that travellers who have written regarding the beaver in the country east of the Rocky Mountains have woefully taken advantage of a traveller's licence, have listened to mere hearsay wonders without seeing for themselves, or that the habits of the beaver differ much in different parts of the country.

It is only after they have been pointed out to you that the "houses" can be recognized, as they seem like loose bundles of sticks lying on the water. In a recent account of the beaver in the British provinces in North America, by an anonymous writer, the houses are described as being exactly the same as I have seen them in the West, and not plastered domes. The vigilance of the little builders is so great that it is rarely, unless closely watched for a long time, that they can be seen. A passing traveller rarely surprises them at their work.

My friend, Mr. John Tod, chief trader in the Hon. Hudson's Bay Company's service during a long residence at Fort M'Leod (a post of that fur company, situated in the northern portion of British Columbia), has communicated to me his observations, which, differing in some respects, substantiate in the main those of Mr. Green. The beaver has from four to ten young—most often four, sometimes eight, rarely ten. It carries its young six months. It produces in May. When the female is going to have young, the male takes the young of last year (for sometimes as many as three generations will remain around the paternal abode), and goes up a river several miles, remaining there until the female has produced.

The dams here, as everywhere else, are perfectly constructed, and with an opening in the middle for the current. The only approach to plastering their houses which I have observed is its giving a self-satisfied "clap" of the tail on laying down its load. The loads are carried between the top of the forepaws and the under surface of the head. The trailing of the tail along the ground gives the vicinity the appearance of being plastered. The house has two flats: the bottom one is on a level with the water; the top one is used to sleep in, and has communication with the water through the bottom. The top one has direct communication with the land. Sometimes they live in merely a tunnel or cave. In winter the Indians go along the edge of the ice, sounding with a stick; and wherever there is the opening of one of these tunnels, the sound being different, he watches and plugs up the opening. If these holes or tunnels are used as escapes from the houses, they break into the latter. If the beaver is not in, the Indian makes a hole in the ice. He then makes a great noise, and watches the rippling of the water to see if he is there, because his motion will have that effect. When alarmed, he generally rushes for his hole; and finding it closed, he is often shot in his endeavour to escape. In trapping, some strong-

smelling stuff (commonly castoreum in rum or cinnamon) is spread on the path. The trap is then set in the water, close to the bank, and covered with about four inches of water. The beaver, attracted by the strong-smelling substance, gives an approving slap of his tail, and starts off, if anywhere in the neighbourhood, to investigate the booty; and as he is leaving the water gives a "purchase," so as to spring up the bank on the very place where the trap is concealed.

His food is principally willows. The bark is preferred, though the wood is eaten when nothing else can be got. It will gnaw through thick trees, apparently for the top foliage; for immediately the tree falls the beavers spring on the branches. A stump showing beaver-gnawing is not unlike Indian chopping—small, irregular chops; and novices in the back woods often mistake them for Indian "sign." Large trees are universally felled so as to fall with the head to land, because, if required for floating down, the branches would impede it being floated off, while the difficulty of dragging it down is not so great, over and above the fact of the impeding branches being easily gnawed off. Much ingenuity is displayed to effect the fall of the tree in the proper position. I have often, in my walks and sails along the solitary rivers of the western wilds, seen three or four beavers piloting a large tree down stream, and noticed that when they were approaching its destination they shoved it into the eddies inshore. They always cut down the trees above their lodges, never on any occasion below. In winter they have a store of food secured at some convenient distance from their abodes. When they require any, they start off to get it. They do not eat there, but bring it to their house, and there make their meal. Of the almost human intelligence of the "thinking beaver" the stories are innumerable; but many of them are much exaggerated, or even fabulous (such as Buffon's account). The following is tolerably well authenticated, my informants vouching for the accuracy of it. In a creek about four miles above the mouth of Quesnelle River, in British Columbia, some miners broke down a dam in the course of the operation for making a ditch, at the same time erecting a wheel to force up the water. Beavers abounded on this stream, and found themselves much inconvenienced by these proceedings. Accordingly, it is said that, in order to stop the wheel, the beavers placed a stick between the flappers in such a way as to stop the revolutions of the wheel. This was so continually repeated, night after night, and was so artfully performed, as to preclude the possibility of its being accidental.

In "Notes on the Habits of the Beaver," presented to the Royal Physical Society, by Mr. James K'Kenzie, of the Hudson Bay Company's service, and to all appearance most careful and trustworthy, details are given differing somewhat from those related by Messrs. Green (in the foregoing paper) and Tod.

When I lived among the Opicheshaht Indians, at the head of the Alberni Canal, V. I., I heard much about *Attoh*, the Beaver, but remarkably little to the credit of its sagacity. They look upon it as rather a commonplace animal, requiring no particu-

lar skill to trap. They used to tell us all sorts of stories about it, but I think they all contain a vein of fiction. Mr. G. M. Sproat has gathered some of this information into his excellent "Scenes and Studies of Savage Life," to which I refer. The beavers lie in these houses, as the Indian expresses it, "like boys;" but when the female has young ones she goes into a separate bed or chamber, I could not ascertain which. There is no storey in a beaver house for convenience of change in case of floods; the waste-way is generally sufficient to carry off any extraordinary quantity of water. In the Alberni country, at least, the houses on the banks of lakes are abandoned when the water is very high, and the beavers go to small streams, which they form into a succession of diminutive lakes. In these they breed. The beaver sleeps during the day, and comes out at night to feed. He cannot see far, but he is keen of scent. The Opicheshah approach to leeward at night, and spear the beaver from a canoe as he floats eating a branch taken from the shore; or they shoot him when he is in shallow water, but not in deep water, as he sinks on receiving the shot. They also block up the opening into his house, break through the wall, and shoot or spear him.

The flesh of the beaver, especially when first smoked and then roasted, is not at all unwelcome as an article of food. The tail, when boiled, is a noted article of trappers' luxury, though, forsooth, if the truth must be told, rather gristly and fat, and rather too much for the stomach of any one but a North-western hunter or explorer. "He is a devil of a fellow," they say on the Rocky Mountain slopes—"he can eat two beavers' tails!" The scrapings of a beaver's skin form one of the strongest descriptions of glue. The Indians at Fort M'Leod's Lake use it to paint their paddles, and the water does not seem to affect it.

When beaver was thirty shillings per pound, Rocky Mountain beavers were piled up on each side of a trade gun until they were on a level with the muzzle, and this was the price! The muskets cost in England some fifteen shillings. These were the days of the "free trapper"—joyous, brave, generous, and reckless—the hero of romance, round whom many a tale of daring circles; the love of the Indian damsel, the beau ideal of a man in the eyes of the half-breed; whose ambition never rose higher than a *coureur de bois*—a class of men who, with all their failings, we cannot but be sorry to see disappearing from the fur country. The fall of beavers' peltry rang their death-knell; and, as a separate profession, trapping is almost extinct, being nearly altogether followed, at uncertain spells, by the Indians and the lower class of half-breeds. The world is fast filling in. The emigrant, with his bullock-team and his plough, is fast destroying all the romance of the Far West—fast filling up with the stern prose of the plough, and the reaping machine, and the whistle of steam, what was once only claimed by the pleasant poetry of the songs of the *voyageur*, the *coureur des bois*, the hunters and trappers of the great fur companies. But perhaps it is better, after all.

The beaver is easily domesticated, and learns to eat any vegetable matter, but requires water occa-

sionally. One kept at Fort M'Leod got blind, but if it got access to water it laved some on its eyes, and generally in an hour quite recovered its sight. It used to gather carpenter's shavings together, and carry them to the door. If the door was shut, it forced them up against it, finishing with a slap of its tail, as if it were building a dam. It had a great antipathy to the Indians. It would come into the Indian hall, where the natives were seated, as is their wont, back to the wall. It would first take their fire-bag, then their axe, and so on until it had carried everything to the door, greatly to the amusement of the Indians. It would then attempt vigorously to eject the owner of the articles. Its weakness for gnawing exhibited itself in a very unpleasant manner; for occasionally, in the morning, the whole of the furniture was prostrate, the beaver having gnawed through the legs of the tables and chairs!

This leads me to remark that the beaver might be easily naturalized again in Britain; and though I cannot recommend them in the light of a drawing-room pet, yet I can conceive no more pleasant inhabitant of our lakes and rivers. Since this was written it has actually been naturalized by the Marquis of Bute in the Island of Bute. We must remember that at one time the beaver was an inhabitant of these islands, but became early extinct. This was, of course, not the *Castor Canadensis*, but the *C. fiber*, Linn.; for the remains found in Britain have now been decided to belong to the latter species, which is, I believe, not yet altogether extinct in Scandinavia. We have, however, historical accounts of its former abundance in this country; and I cannot better conclude these desultory notices than by recapitulating the information we possess regarding it as a former inhabitant of the British Isles, referring for a more particular account of it as a Scottish animal, extinct within historic periods, to Dr. Charles Wilson's "Researches on Castoreum and the Beaver in Scotland." The earliest notice of it we know is in the ninth century, viz.—in the Welsh Laws of Hywel Dha—where we read of it even then as a rare or valued animal of the chase; for while the marten's skin is valued at twenty-four pence, the otter's at only twelve pence, that of the Llostdydan, or beaver, is valued at the great sum of one hundred and twenty pence, or at five times the price of the marten's, or ten times the price of the otter's. It thus seems even in the times of the Heptarchy to have been on the decrease; its sun had early begun to set. In the year 1158, Giraldus de Barri (or, as he is variously called, Sylvester Giraldus, or Giraldus Cambriensis), in his droll account of the itine-ration he made through Wales, in company with Baldwin, Archbishop of Canterbury (who journeyed thither in order to stir up the Welsh to join in the Crusades, and who afterwards followed the train of Richard Cœur de Lion, and fell before Acre), tells us that in his day it was only found on the River Teivi, in Cardiganshire, and gives a curious account of its habits, derived in part from his own observations. In John Ray's time, many of the places in the neighbourhood of the river bore the name of "Llynrafrange," or the Beaver Lake, and, for all we know to the contrary, may to this day. About

the same time it was probably known in Scotland, but only as a rare animal. Hector Boece (or Boethius, as his name has been Latinized), that shrewd old father of Scottish historians, enumerates the "fibri," or beavers, with perfect confidence as among the inhabitants of Loch Ness, whose fur was in request for exportation towards the close of the fifteenth century; and he even goes farther, and talks of an "incomparable number," though perhaps he may be only availing himself of a privilege which moderns have taken the liberty of granting to mediæval authors when dealing with curious facts. Bellenden, in a translation of Boethius's "Croniklis of Scotland," which he undertook, at the request of James VI., about the middle of the sixteenth century, while omitting stags, roe deer, and even otters, in his anxiety for accuracy, mentions "bevers," without the slightest hesitation:—"Mony wyld hors and amang yame are mony martrikis (pine martens), bevers, quhitredis (weasels) and toddis (foxes), the furrings and skynnis of thame are coft (bought) with gret price amang uncouth (foreign) merchandis." It is, however, more than probable that the worthy historians were influenced by a little national pride when they recorded the beaver as an inhabitant of Loch Ness in the fifteenth century, as no mention of it is made in an Act dated June, 1424, though "martricks," fourmartes (polecats), "otters," and "toddies" are specified. They were perhaps so strongly impressed by the wide-spread tradition of its existence in former days, as to be led to enumerate it among the animals of Scotland in those times; and it may be mentioned in passing that both worthies boast immoderately of the productions of their country. At the beginning of this century (at least) the Highlanders of Scotland had a peculiar name for the animal—*Losleathan* or *Dobhran losleathan*, "the broad-tailed otter." According to Dr. Stuart, of Luss, in a letter to the Rev. Dr. Neill, quoted by Prof. Fleming, a tradition used to exist that the "beaver or broad-tailed otter," once abounded in Lochaber. That may be so or not; but, at all events, it does not now exist anywhere within the bounds of the British islands; and a considerable doubt might be still thrown on the accounts of the old writers, were not remains continually dug up in all parts of the country. I would fain hope that in a few years it may again be an inhabitant of our lakes and rivers.

In these scattered notes I have not attempted anything like a systematic history of the animal, leaving the separate accounts to tell their own tales. No more pleasing work could, however, be written than a Monograph of the Beaver, anatomically and historically; and I trust that before long it may be undertaken by some one at once an artist and a naturalist.

THERE is a surprising echo between two barns in Belvedere, Alleghany County, New York. The echo repeats eleven times a word of one, two, or three syllables; it has been heard to repeat thirteen times. By placing one's self in the centre between the two barns, there will be a double echo, one in the direction of each barn, and a monosyllable will be repeated twenty-two times.

Dogs and Dog Poisoning.

THAT the dog-stealing fraternity had something to do with the wholesale dog-poisoning which has been carried on in various parts of the metropolis was a conclusion to which I was recently led by the apparent skill with which the poisonings have been effected, and the utter failure of the police to bring even a single perpetrator of any of these cruel and dastardly outrages to justice, although their zeal has been stimulated by the offer of very large rewards—one of which, still unearned, amounts to £200. I accordingly determined to interview a dog-stealer willing to be interviewed. They are a modest class, who, although laudably proud of their profession, are not in the habit of boasting of their connection with it, or of their achievements in it. After a few signal failures to overcome the bashful reticence of members of the profession, I mentioned my desire to an ex-sergeant of the Metropolitan Police, and asked him if he could assist me in carrying it out.

"Easily," he replied. "Bow-legged Dawkins is your man. I've known him as one of the cleverest dog-stealers in London for the last five-and-thirty years, and if you don't mind standing him half a pint of gin, you can draw him out any extent."

"He shall have it. But where does he live, and how am I to obtain an introduction to him?"

"In the Borough. I'll manage the introduction. He won't mind speaking freely before me, although I ran him tight on more than one occasion a few years ago; for, like myself, he's now on the retired list, being too old and rheumatic for more active work than the breeding and selling of dogs—a business out of which he contrives to make a tolerably good living. Take a run over to the Borough about five o'clock this evening, and look into the little back parlour of the White Cross. Any one will show you the house. If I'm not there, wait for me; and I'll soon turn up with Dawkins."

I did so. I found that the ex-sergeant and Bow-legged Dawkins had arrived before me, and were quietly enjoying their gin and water and a pair of "churchwardens." They were the only persons in the little dingy parlour; and the sergeant, who pretended to consider my visit an unexpected one, at once entered into conversation with me, and introduced Dawkins as an old friend of his. The latter was a hard-featured, shrewd-looking old fellow of about sixty or sixty-five years of age, with a luminous complexion, and small, dark grey eyes, whose almost juvenile brightness was in strange contrast to his scanty and snowy locks. Although not much over five feet in height, the breadth and fullness of his chest would not have discredited a prize-fighter, and he stood upon the curved limbs from which he derived his *sobriquet* as firmly as he could have done when he was younger by a quarter of a century; but his finger joints showed that he had had some hard struggles with the demon of rheumatism. He wore a faded velveteen shooting-jacket, with mother-of-pearl buttons, an equally faded pair of tight Bedford cords, a billycock hat, and around his neck, which was not disfigured by anything in the shape of a shirt collar, was a voluminous handkerchief of the

pattern known as "bird's-eye." Mr. Dawkins having kindly consented to accept a "go" of gin at my expense, we sat down, and entered into conversation.

"If you're in want of a good dog—no matter of what breed—I recommend you to look up my friend Dawkins; for you may rely on his judgment, and he'll not overcharge you," remarked the sergeant to me.

"Dogs are a bad investment at the present time," I replied, "for they are being poisoned by the score in every district in the metropolis."

"Right you are, guv'nor," said Mr. Dawkins; "I knows it to my cost. We can't sell a blessed dorg now, bar we parts for five bob with a hanimal worth as many quid. If this p'isoning goes on much longer, I sees nothing for us but the workus."

"Can you form any idea who are the perpetrators of these dog poisonings?" I inquired.

"Not one. We leave the diskivery of such hofferders to the bobbies. In coorse, they'll find out hall about 'em."

"I'm afraid not," remarked the sergeant; "for up to the present the police appear to be at a regular deadlock in the matter."

"Now, isn't that strange, sergeant, considerin' 'ow wery rare they fails to find hout wotever they're set on to? You mind wot fust-rate jobs they made of the 'Oxton double murder, the Peckham ghost, the Coram-street murder, an' the Westbourne-grove murder; an' look 'ow well they're gettin' on with the Balham mystery. Why, this dorg p'isoning will be honly an amousement to them," replied Mr. Dawkins, with a chuckle.

"Don't be cheeky, Dawkins," said the sergeant; "but just answer a few plain questions. In the first place, don't you think it probable that the deaths of many, if not all, of these dogs may have been caused by some new form of distemper?"

"Wrong scent, sergeant. The doctors 'ave found p'ison in all the poor brutes wot they post-mortemed, an' the hinsides of three dorgs wot I hopened was as sound as bells. No; 'taint distemper. I knows as much about dorgs as any doctor or vet., an' I aint got a bloomin' bit o' doubt that p'isonin' is goin' on."

"But," I remarked, "the internal organs of a dog which died of cramps or some form of cholera might appear to you as healthy as those of an animal which had taken poison."

"Right you are again, gov'nor, but only hup to a sartin p'int. You forgets that in case of a heppy-demic the symptoms, as the doctors calls the sufferin's of sick dorgs an' sick people, would be much about the same in hevery hinstance. Now, the symptoms of the dorgs wot are dyin' sudden in various parts o' Lunnon aint all the same. Some has womitin', others convulsions, an' others a stif-fenin' of the limbs an' a foam'in' from the mouth."

"And what conclusion do you draw from that?"

"A wery simple one—that there aint no heppy-demic a-goin', an' that the p'isons used aint always the same, but is just wot each p'isoner can easiest get."

"But with the restrictions on the sale of poisons which are at present in force, it seems strange that such quantities of poison of any kind as must have

been used during the past two or three months could have been purchased without leading to the detection of some of the poisoners."

"Bless yer heart, no! Rat p'isons will kill dorgs an' men, as well as rats an' mice, an' you can 'ave yer choice of the 'arf a dozen kinds in penny or two-penny packets. Harsenic an' proosian acid or laudenum can be bought in doses big enough to p'ison a couple o' bull-dorgs just as easy—leastways in this neighbourhood, an' I've no doubt it's much the same in others."

"I saw it more than hinted by a correspondent of one of the daily papers that the 'pinchers' were at the bottom of all this dog poisoning. What do you say to that, Dawkins?" inquired the sergeant.

"That it's a villainous cram, an' that the man wot wrote it oughter get a month on the mill," exclaimed Dawkins, with indignant emphasis, as he emptied his glass and motioned to have it replenished.

I was not astonished at his indignation when the sergeant informed me that "pincher" was a slight euphemism for a member of the dog-stealing fraternity.

"It's enough to make a cove cop the needle," resumed Dawkins, after a pause, "that noosepapers shouldn't be perwented from takin' away men's characters in sich a style. You know I've left the per-fession long ago, sargint, but I has my feelin's for it still; an' I do say that I never knowed a 'pincher' to p'ison even a cur dorg—bar, in course, he did it to put a poor brute as 'ad hincurable distemper, or the like, hout of pain, an' I've known mor'n one as would snivel if they saw a dorg a-sufferin'. People as 'ave reg'lar dealin's with dorgs, an' spends their lives among 'em, aint likely to be cruel to 'em. I don't call a neat bit o' trimmin', or a touch o' colour, cruelty, 'cos it aint painful, an' is rekisite sometimes afore a dorg can be brought out; but that's the most I've ever known to be done to a dorg by one of us. As to p'isonin' dorgs, wot could any man in the per-fession gain by it? If a dorg aint worth pinchin', he aint worth p'isonin'; an' if he's worth pinchin', doesn't it stand to reason that a man would sooner try an' make 'arf a quid, or even a wheel, out of 'im, than give 'im a dose of p'ison?"

"But the skill with which so many dogs have been poisoned would lead one to fancy that the poisoners must be persons exceptionally well acquainted with the habits of dogs," I remarked.

"Gammon! It don't require no skill to stuff a lump of meat or a bit of cheese with p'ison an' drop it where you knows it's likely to be picked up by a dorg. Another thing, guv'nor, wot 'll show you that the per-fession aint 'ad nothink to do with these p'isonin's is, that there aint been a bit o' duff found in any of the dorgs wot died. That's good enough, I think."

"Duff? What is duff?" I inquired.

"Why, guv'nor, I thought you was a well-hin-formed kind o' gent, on account o' knowin' the sargint—for he can give you the straight tip about most things; but a man's hignorance aint always his own fault, an' as I'm goin' to take another 'arf-quartern at your hexpense, I don't mind tellin' you wot duff is."

"Thank you. Gin again, I suppose?"

"Correct you are, guv'nor, an' a brick, too, although you aint over bright on some things. Now, duff is b'iled liver, steeped in summat as dogs is terrible fond on, an' they'll foller to the world's end whoever throws them a piece of it, in the 'opes o' gettin' more."

"Duff, then, is the mysterious substance which you throw to dogs when you wish to steal them?"

"Say when we wishes them to come 'ome with us, guv'nor. It's a better word, an' more perlitte. Well, if dorg-stealers, as you'd call gen'lemen of the fancy, wished to p'ison dorgs, it's in a lump of duff they'd put the p'ison, knowing that no dorg could pass it without gobbling it; but, as I said afore, not a scrap of duff has been found in any of the p'isoned dorgs, nor has there been a bit picked up in any of the streets where dorg p'isoning has been goin' on. That I know for a fact, an' you may take Bill Dawkins's word for it."

"But, still, you have thrown no light upon these dog poisonings."

"There's a many ways of haccoutin' for 'em. In the fust place, I don't b'lieve they're reg'lar planned things that's been carried hout hall hover Lunnon by one gang. If they was, even the 'coppers'—no hofence, sargint—could grab some of the gang. I dare say they started in this way: Some gent, or his wife or 'kid,' was bit or barked at by a neighbour's dorg, an' he went an' bought p'ison, put it in a bit of meat, an' threw it in the dorg's way. The p'isoner not bein' discovered, another gent, who'd been annoyed in the same way, went an' done similar; an' their game was tuk up by coves as 'ad spite again neighbours wot kep' dorgs—for you'll find that lots of dorgs 'ave been p'isoned close to where they lived. No conviction takin' place, the poor frightened folks wot are crazy about hydrophiar, plucked up courage an' went in for p'isonin' all the dorgs they could, so as to lessen their chances of bein' bitten; an' this they could easily do in the suburbs, where the p'isonin' began, by dropping the p'ison on the foot-paths on their way to the 'bus in the mornin', or when comin' 'ome at night. Then shopkeepers wot don't want dorgs a-comin' about their doors took to droppin' p'ison there, an' I don't see no reason why some o' them shouldn't ha' been caught; but they 'aven't, an' there's a hend of it. Lastly, the accounts of the p'isonin's in the noosepapers set on a lot o' mischievous people in wariou parts to keep hup the hexcitement by droppin' p'ison in the streets as they passed along; for there is plenty o' willains, rich an' poor, who, I'm sorry to say, would look on the p'isonin' of a poor dorg in this way as no more than a bit o' fun. In these ways, guv'nor, to the best of my knowledge an' belief, the p'isonin's started from small beginnin's, until they spread hall hover Lunnon."

"Can you suggest any plan by which even a few of the perpetrators could be brought to justice?"

"Well, that aint my business, guv'nor; but I think that a dozen detectives, properly planted in neighbourhoods where the p'isonin's are bein' carried on, should be able to grab a few of the willains—that is, if they wos worth their salt. What do you say, sargint?"

"I dare say you're right, Dawkins; but I think a

few wideawake chaps like yourself would be more useful for the purpose than any detectives."

That was my own opinion; and after some further conversation, which did not, however, throw any additional light on these mysterious outrages, I terminated my interview with the talented ex-dog-stealer, Mr. Bow-legged Dawkins.

Table Sketches.

HOST. You will all do justice, I hope, to a plain dinner, but I have just engaged a new cook. I have three tests by which I estimate culinary ability.

Guest. What are they?

Hostess. Nay, we leave you to discover; give your opinion on the dishes, and we shall find out.

Viveur. This hare soup is one of them, I should think; it is excellent, because it is of the true game flavour without meatiness.

Connoisseur. Made from Lady St. Clair's recipe, I should say.

Host. What is that?

Connoisseur. First the hare should be quite fresh, and the blood should be saved. Then the hare should be cut in pieces, and put in a dish with two quarts of water for an hour; after which the blood should be added, and the liquid strained into the stew-pan, and stirred till it boils. Then add a carrot, a stick of celery, an ounce of black pepper in a muslin bag, a bunch of savoury herbs, salt, and a sensation of chopped onion. Simmer for three hours. An hour before dinner strain the soup through a sieve, put in the pieces of hare; return all to the stew-pan and boil, thickening with a teaspoonful of ground rice.

Guest. A savoury stew; but pardon me if I say that as a rule I prefer game as an after-course, and like a thin soup, such as *Fulienne*, to herald the fish. By the bye, the new cook has one virtue, witness these delicate fried smelts; and the sole is just as good.

Viveur. Yes, she has had the sense to use a plain iron frying-pan—always the best, and the only one used by the Jewish purveyors of fried fish, who thoroughly understand their business. Then she has used fine olive oil instead of lard, an indispensable element for delicacy.

Connoisseur. What is the best sauce for fried sole?

Host. I always add a spoonful of Lucca oil in my plate, and take no other sauce but salt.

Viveur. Right. There is nothing better. It gives the sole almost the flavour of fish fresh caught. A glass of hock?

Host. Only two *entrées*. *Fricandeau aux fine herbes* and kidneys in Madeira.

Guest. What is a *fricandeau*?

Connoisseur. Nobody knows but the cook. Don't ask. Pass the Burgundy.

Viveur. Having a healthy appetite, I ask for a plain slice of boiled mutton. It is boiled, isn't it?

Guest. Yes; and boiled properly. There is only one way of doing it, and, plain as the dish is, it is very seldom cooked well. The joint should be popped into the pot just as the water is at boiling point, and kept only simmering till it is done. See how the gravy follows the knife. No caper sauce,

thank you. I never eat caper sauce except with turbot.

Connoisseur. I don't agree with you there; but if you've never tried salmon and broad beans, let me advise you to make the experiment next summer.

Viveur. I've guessed one of the tests, I fancy. No cook who was not a genius could have thought of serving up a capon stuffed with oysters. It's a splendid dish. The oysters, with the liquor that comes from them, should be placed inside, and the ordinary stuffing in the neck. The fowl must then be sewn up and simmered gently.

Host. Let me give you a little braised turkey.

Connoisseur. May I ask how this is cooked? It is simple perfection.

Hostess. Yes. For a good-sized turkey, take about a quart of new milk, two large Spanish onions, a good head of celery, a teaspoonful of brown sugar, the same quantity of salt. Cut the onions in half, and break the celery into sticks. Place all in the stewpan with a pint of water. Stuff the turkey with delicate forcemeat, and place it in the stewpan. There it should just simmer until it is thoroughly cooked. Then take out the onion and celery. Chop them up, and, with half a pint of fresh milk and half a pint of the liquor in which the turkey has been stewed, make celery and onion sauce, thickened with a piece of butter rolled in flour. A good-sized piece of ham or bacon should be cooked with the turkey, in order to secure the proper flavour.

Host. Dry champagne?

Connoisseur. Capitally roasted pheasant; and the woodcocks look just as good.

Viveur. Yes. There is only one rule in roasting, and it has been observed here. First hang the roast before a sharp fire for a few minutes, and then take it back. So you may keep in the juice. Pass the Burgundy.

Guest. Manchester pudding, as I'm a Cockney.

Host. Yes. Try it. It is made from the true North Country recipe. You line the bottom of a pie-dish with puff paste, and on this place a layer of any kind of jam you prefer. Then flavour half a pint of milk with lemon peel, strain it on to three ounces of stale grated bread, and boil it for two or three minutes, taking care to stir well. Add the yolks of four and the whites of two eggs, two ounces of butter, and three tablespoonfuls of brandy. Sweeten to taste, and, after stirring the ingredients well together, pour the mixture cold on the jam, and bake the pudding for an hour.

Host. Liqueur? Gentlemen, have you dined?

All. We have; but what are your two tests? We decline to guess where everything is so good.

Host. That is just it. The first test is that none of the company shall decide that any particular dish is best, the second that the gravies shall not attract attention from the meats.

Guest. May I invite you all to a genuine North Country dinner next month?

All. Yes; and won't we come?

Hostess. But will you give us a hot-pot?

Viveur. Hot-pot. Do you mean the West Indian dish?

Connoisseur. No; that is pepper-pot. Quite a different thing.

Guest. Lancashire hot-pot is the very acme of cookery—a sublimation of flavours, a combination of courses, a simple single dish, yet a dinner in itself, enough to satisfy the taste of our friend *Viveur* himself.

Madame. Oh, pray enlighten us. What is the recipe?

Guest. Well, I had it from the editor of a critical journal, at whose chambers I first partook of it; and he concocted the dish, or rather, I should say, built up the pot himself, and sent it to be tenderly cooked in an oven not far distant. It is grand. *Crede experto.*

Host. A sort of sea-pie, then?

Guest. Sea-pie! nonsense. But listen. As the cookery books say, "Take" a brown earthenware jar with a closely-fitting cover. Then, if you desire to make a hot-pot for five or six persons, procure three pounds of mutton-steak cut out of the centre of the leg. Remove every particle of fat, skin, and bone, and cut the steak into small slices. Take three-quarters of a pound of rump steak, and treat it in a similar way. Clean and cut up three mutton kidneys. Clean and trim a punnet of mushrooms. Take eighteen large oysters, and strain them from their liquor. Boil three pounds of fine potatoes, peel and break them. Cut up two large Spanish onions into slices. Add to the strained liquor of the oysters not more than a pint of water, six teaspoonfuls of mushroom ketchup, and a teaspoonful of Tarragon vinegar for gravy. Mix in a plate one tablespoonful of pepper, two of salt, and half a nutmeg grated for seasoning. Now take the pot and proceed to build up as follows:—A layer of onion, a layer of meat, with small bits of butter, to compensate for the removal of the fat, and a little seasoning. Then a few mushrooms and oysters, and a layer of broken potatoes. Repeat these series of layers till the pot is filled or the materials exhausted; but it is best to have a pot according to the size required. Now put in your gravy, and let it soak well; place a closely-packed layer of mashed potatoes on the top; put on your cover, which should be luted well round the edge with a stiff paste of flour and water. Set the pot in a slack oven, and let it stew for at least four hours. Just before it has finished cooking, take three or four raw potatoes, cut them into quarters, and roast them in a Dutch oven till they are thoroughly done and quite brown. When your hot-pot is taken out of the oven, take off the cover, pop in the bruised potatoes, packing them closely; wreath a large, clean table napkin round the pot, and serve it without delay. Your guests are already seated; the glorious brown vase is set upon the table in the midst of a round dish—a tureen stand will do best; you deftly dig down into the ambrosial strata, a gush of odorous perfume arises, like gales of Araby the Blest, and the hostess triumphs!

Host. I should think she does. Why, the dish must be fit for an emperor.

Connoisseur. I wonder if Mr. George Augustus Sala has the recipe for his promised work on "Cookery from the Earliest Ages to the Present Time"?

Guest. I dare say he hasn't; for though there was

a literary party, consisting of an eminent dramatist, and two or three no less eminent journalists, to aid in pronouncing on the Hot-pot to which I refer, Mr. Sala was not one of them.

Madame. I hear that Mr. Sala has been to Spain.

Connoisseur. Yes; though whether he has brought back with him any culinary lore from that country of greasy viands, polenta, pomegranates, and olives, remains to be seen.

Host. By the bye, Mr. J. C. Jeaffreson has published "A Book about the Table," in continuation of his Books about Doctors and Lawyers, and so on. It's sure to be entertaining, and I mean to get it from Mudie's.

Viveur. Yes; Mr. Jeaffreson's book is an *olla podrida*, but it is exhaustive and interesting, though there are some mistakes in it—as where he confounds the celebrated Monsieur Chloë, the *chef* of the Duke of Newcastle, with a female cook.

Guest. Perhaps he fancied it was a negress; but the mention of M. Chloë, who was a very celebrated person, previously mentioned by pamphleteers of the George the Second period, and probably "chaffed" very often for his ways, suggests to me the origin of a very obscure saying, "Pardon me, ladies, but I've often wondered what was the meaning of saying that a person was 'as drunk as Chloë.'" Perhaps it originated with the celebrated *chef*.

Host. There was a good article in the *Spectator* the other day, though rather a fantastic one, on the subject of dining. Some of the remarks are bright, though. For instance, it says, in advocating the *dîner à la Russe*, that a strip of a table, broad enough to hold two plates opposite each other and leave six inches between them, is ample for mere utility, and we may question if the demands of the eye require more than six inches more. That gives room for candelabra, which may widen in the air, not on the table; and for as much colour, preferentially in the shape of flowers, as the eye can bear without either weariness or sense of special attraction; and what more is required? The writer holds that the white damask table cloth, though an excellent ground-colour, throwing everything else up, is not the only colour which would be pleasing; he says it refracts light a little too much, even if you like brilliance.

A Sudden Shower.

AMONGST the many mysteries of London, there is none more difficult to solve than that of the sudden gathering of a crowd; and there is no crowd which presents more strange, various, and characteristic features than that composed of the people who "stand up" out of the rain. "Where the mud comes from" has long been a matter for wondering inquiry; but by what strange convulsion of social life the people in this sudden and incongruous assembly are thrown towards one particular spot is a still more amazing consideration.

There are certain gateways and narrow covered passages in this great city which seem contrived as refuges for wayfarers during a shower. Seldom at any other time is a soul seen beneath their shelter; and few of the ordinary passengers through the main

streets have ever penetrated their remoter depths. Once let a brisk shower set in, however, and they are filled like the pit-entrance to a theatre, but with a crowd at once less noisy and more diverse. The "laundress," who, perhaps, has the care of chambers within some of the houses to which the gateway is the entrance, smiles with grim derision as she comes out on an errand and discovers how full of company her precinct has become. She even stands there herself for a moment, looking out upon the wet pavement, and eyeing the assembly with that peculiar glance which is identified with "taking stock."

It would be difficult to "take stock" of some of the lingerers, however, for they are to be seen at no other time and in no other place: we say it boldly, and after long observation.

Who is that strange, faded old woman, dressed in black silk, all creased and shrunk, and spotted in great patches of the colour of a stale tea-leaf? Why does she wear a bonnet which seems to have been made of a spare breadth of that already too-spate dress? For what hands were those loose-fingered gloves originally intended? And why does she carry an impracticable umbrella, which is tied with a rusty string twisted round a horn button, and evidently has not been opened for years? Is she the last claimant to some great estate in Chancery, and are the papers concealed in that umbrella? With what a strange expression of interest she regards the fashionable attire, and especially the dainty feet and ankles, of the young creature who has flitted under the grim old gateway for a moment's refuge, lest her already slightly-ruffled plumage should be made "a sight," and that snowy skirt be maculate with street mud! With a gaze of serious wonder does the mysterious old lady note every point of gay attire, as if with the object of carrying away the pattern in her mind's eye, and having it made up for herself in some distinct and distant period of existence. Why do people buy oranges when they are standing out of the rain; or, rather, why do people then buy oranges who taste them at no other time? Has the plashing shower a tendency to suggest a parched or arid condition of the body, or is it for the amusement of peeling the fruit that some man, whose appearance betokens beer, should invest the price of his usual refreshment in a way so unexpected? That shadow with the red face and hollow eyes, which seems to crouch behind the other loiterers nearest the wall, would never spend his money so. He always appears on the occasion of a shower, but never takes shelter until his greasy clothes shine with superficial wet; then, should his miserable appearance evoke, to the extent of twopence, the pity of some mistaken philanthropist, he looks wistfully out at the weather, endeavours to assume an air of anxious responsibility, and shambles off to the nearest street, where a public-house lies just round the corner.

The man who is sitting on the basket knows him; indeed, the man on the basket knows more of that select crowd than would be obvious at first sight. He is the general medium of such communications as pass amongst them; for he takes possession of the gateway in a manner which bespeaks thorough acquaintance with its resources. He seems to regard

the rain as a fortuitous accident, which gives him the opportunity of smoking a quiet pipe; and, perhaps reflecting that "one touch of nature makes the whole world kin," takes advantage of his immovable position to address a remark or two to the other temporary tenants of the locality. The boys are a sad drawback to the quiet enjoyment of such a retreat; perhaps a stray cheesemonger's lad, or even a printer's boy, may seek a minute's shelter, and be tolerably quiet; but the newspaper boys are utterly objectionable. They will dash in suddenly, the wet running from every seam, and spatter the mud from their thick highlows; then, after giving everybody the trouble to make way for them, will dash out again, hurling themselves into the rain with an exultant and defiant yell, which wakes all the strange, unearthly echoes in the neighbourhood. They will stay longer if there is the chance of witnessing anything from so secure a retreat, especially anything involving the grief of such passengers as cannot stay for shelter, and their remarks upon the personal appearance of such unfortunate pedestrians serve to amuse the company until they become more particular in their application, and are summarily checked by the man on the basket by a method known casually as "clouting the head" of the author.

It is a wonderful standpoint for some strange observations of humanity, this same sheltering gateway; and when, after the last cab has rattled from the stand, the rain abates, and that queer crowd melts away, never perhaps to meet again, the philosopher who has leisure to ponder on the mysteries of London streets will find his reflections partaking of a grave and sorrowful character, for which he will not be able immediately to account.

Ancient Quackery.

IN a small manual, published by one Nathaniel Brooks, at the Angel in Cornhill, in the year 1658, there is stuff enough to make the fortune of half a dozen nostrum-vending speculators. It is entitled, "The Queen's Closet Opened; or, The Pearle of Practise," and professes to consist of "many incomparable secrets presented to her Majesty by the most experienced persons, many whereof were honoured with her own practise when she pleased to descend to these private recreations," the invaluable collection being edited by "W. M.," "late one of her Gracious Majesty's servants." Foremost of the budget is a recipe for the "Water of Life," which is not only infallible as tending to increase the duration of existence in the healthy to at least a hundred years, but is also most excellent "in cases of dropsie, palsie, ague, sweating, spleen, yellow and black jaundies; it strengthens the spirits, brain, heart, liver, and stomach." It consists of a brew that requires some care in its concoction: "Take cinnamon, ginger, angelica seeds, cloves, and nutmegs, each one ounce; a little saffron; stoned raysens, one pound; the loins and legs of an old coney, the red flesh and the sinews of a leg of mutton, four young chickens, twelve larks, the yolk of twelve eggs, a loaf of white bread cut in sops, three ounces of mithridate of treacle, and as much muscadine as will cover them all." These ingredients have to be

distilled with a moderate fire, and kept in a double glass, close stopped—a dose being three spoonfuls, mingled with ale, beer, or wine.

In these degenerate days we do not pretend to prescribe for "heart-ache"—in a medicinal manner, that is to say. As most poor mortals are aware, heart-ache may have its origin in a hundred causes. The "noble entrail," as "W. M." styles it, might be brought low by domestic trouble, worry of business, or the fickleness of womankind—it mattered not what—the Queen's closet reveals a cure that never fails, assuming, of course, that it is taken with perfect faith, the first dose doubtless affording instant relief, and a very few doses effecting a perfect cure. The only difficulty is that the afflicted individual who, in these fastidious times, attempts to prepare the precious physic, would have to be careful to avoid the observation of the officers of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The compound is dubbed "Oyl of Swallows," and this is how to make it:—"Take at least ten or twelve swallows, and put them alive into a mortar, and put to them lavender, spike, cammomil, kust grass, rile wort, valerain, walnut leaves, wormwood, brook lime, and the tops of young bays, each a handful. Beat all together with a quart of neat's-foot oil or May butter. Put it in an earthen pot, and stop it very close with a piece of dough, so that no air can come out. Set it nine days in a cellar, and afterwards boil six or eight hours; but first open your pot and put in half a pound of wax, white or yellow, and a pint of salad oyl, and strain through a canvas cloth." This remedy should be efficacious, if not in all kinds of heart-ache, at all events when the patient is suffering from over tenderness of that organ. Weakly yielding young ladies, for instance, who felt themselves in peril from too ready an inclination to obey the dictates of a compassionate nature, might face the threatened danger with tolerable safety after they had accomplished the feat of braying twelve little birds alive in a mortar.

Scarcely less valuable than the "Oyl of Swallows" is an "Electuary for Passion." Sold at 1s. 1½d. or even 2s. 9d. a bottle, this should be a boon eagerly welcomed in thousands of English homes that at present are scarcely comparable with a dovecot, in consequence of what is called incompatibility of temper as regards the ruling powers.

In "W. M.'s" time—thanks to the "Electuary for Passion"—husbands used to be everlastingly amiable; and why not now? Wives, look to it! "Take a quart of white wine and a pint of sack, steep in it as much broad thyme as it will wet, put to it galingale and calamus aromaticus of each one ounce, cloves, mace, ginger, and grains of paradise two drachms. Steep these all night, and next morning distil in an ordinary still, and drink warm with sugar," or with coffee milked and sugared! Just imagine the irritable man coming down to breakfast, fussy and snappish as usual, and with no idea of saying a single civil thing. He stirs his coffee, and he sips (it has been electuarized, remember!); his clouded brow clears a little. He sips again, and cheerily chips an egg and chirps to the canary. He is as different a man as light from dark compared with the griffin who sat down to breakfast yesterday. He

wears a pleasant visage, and has a kind word even for the cat. He hums a lively air as he is assisted into his overcoat, and, saluting his wife as a dutiful husband should, remarks gaily that he cannot make out what makes him on such good terms with himself. But she knows, and murmurs a blessing on the electuary for the cure of passion. There is, however, one recipe to be found in this choice little book that just now should make it worth its weight, not merely in gold, but in the choicest gems that ever adorned a monarch's crown. Unless its virtues are exaggerated, had it been discovered and acted on nearly twelve months since, and up to the present time, the country might have been saved an outlay of many thousands of pounds, to say nothing of what is of far greater importance, the risking of scores of noble lives who have bravely volunteered to play the part of good Samaritans on the dreadful fields of human butchery in Turkey. If "W. M." is to be relied on, it is by no means necessary that those who minister to the victims of gun or sabre should be on the spot, and in immediate attendance on the patient. By adopting "W. M.'s" method, the doctoring may be done at a distance. The wonderful recipe in question is headed, "To Cure Wounds, though the patient be never so far off;" and the way of doing it is exceedingly simple. All one has to do is "take a quart of pure spring water, and put it into some Roman vitriol, and let it dissolve. Then, if you have any blood of the wound, either in woollen, or linen, or silk, put the cloth so blooded in some water, and rub it once a day, and if the wound be not mortal the blood will out; if it be, it will not out. Let the patient keep his wound clean, washing it with white wine. Whenever you wash the cloth the party wounded shall sensibly find ease. Let the cloth be constantly in the water."

Carp-Bream.

THE introduction of carp-bream into the Thames from the Ouse, and barbel from the former into the latter, both for the first time, are events in domestic acclimatization worth recording. Yet there are those who would pronounce *ex cathedra* that such experiments are worse than useless, as they cannot, as alleged, succeed—the reason given being that bream require sluggish waters, and that barbel will only thrive in swift streams. This dictum certainly evinces a sad deficiency of the present advanced knowledge of the *habitat* of fish. If bream of the more active kind, such as the carp-bream, will not profit in the Thames at Cookham and Maidenhead, where they have been recently introduced, how is it that complaints from some anglers come to our ears that there are too many of the white bream at Kingston and Walton, and that when a few were carried up to the weir at Chertsey they increased and multiplied so rapidly as to become a nuisance to anglers who were in pursuit of more choice fish? As for bream not liking swift waters, this is a fallacy; they may prefer the quieter flow, but that they do not object to even the most dashing and foaming weir pools may be proved by fishing in the whirl and froth of that of Shepperton,

from which some of the heaviest bream are taken every season.

Again, those who would discourage the attempt to introduce barbel into the Ouse, because it is a sluggish stream, can know but little of this river's fall, which is best indicated by its several mills; and as each mill has a lashing tail, a wash waterfall, and a mill course, it might have occurred to them that no better homes could be found for this fish than such localities. The carp-bream, now for the first time placed in the Thames, is a valuable fish, extolled by Chaucer, and alluded to in the "Book of St. Albans" as "a noble fysshe and a deyntous." It was highly prized and priced in Sir William Dugdale's time (1419), when it was valued at twenty pence, while the day's labour of a master carpenter was less than sixpence, from which was withdrawn three-halfpence if his food was supplied to him. We are told also that a pie containing four bream was sent from Warwickshire to a distant part of Yorkshire at the cost of sixteen shillings, which amount included the wages of two men for three days in catching the fish, together with the flour and spices for making the pie, and the charge of conveying it to its destination.

The difference between the common or white bream and the golden or yellow kind is as that "between chalk and cheese." The one is of mud—muddy, and is one mass of small bones; the flesh of the other is as rich in flavour as that of a John Dory, the taste of which it much resembles; but they both have for years been confounded under one name, and it is full time the more deserving member of the family was rescued from so injurious a prejudice. This needs no effort on the River Trent; for there, especially at Gainsborough, the carp-bream, when in season, fetches from fourpence to eightpence per pound, and men are constantly employed with rod and line, and in some forty feet of the river, in taking them, the white sort when caught being ignominiously killed on the side of the boat, and cast overboard to feed the gulls, which are ever on the look-out.

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BY GEO. MANVILLE FENN.

CHAPTER VII.—THE SORROWS OF SEPTIMUS HARDON.



It was with a pleasant smile upon his countenance, and a bunch of water-cresses in his hand, that Septimus Hardon entered his rooms one day, humming loudly, like some jocular bee; but ceased suddenly on seeing that there was a visitor, gazing with sympathizing eyes upon the flush-cheeked child lying upon Mrs. Hardon's arm.

"I think you had better have advice, Mrs. Hardon," said the visitor, the Rev. Arthur Sterne, the calm, earnest, quiet-looking curate of the neighbouring church.

Lucy Grey, now budding into womanhood, was seated upon the floor by the couch, with a little boy in her lap, and letting the hands of the child on her mother's arm stray amongst the glossy tresses of her hair.

"Advice? What, doctor?" said Septimus, gazing in his wife's anxious face; "is Letty really ill, then?"

And then, in a bewildered way, he began rubbing his hands together, as if washing them in emptiness, and afterwards drying them upon nothing.

"Let me send in a doctor," said Mr. Sterne, kindly, as he took his hat to leave; "there are symptoms of fever, I think. Don't let it get too firm a hold before you have advice."

"Thank you, thank you; do send him, please," said Septimus, helplessly. "But—"

He was about to alter his request, for just then his hand came in contact with the light leather purse in his pocket, but the curate had hurriedly left the room. Then, taking his stepchild's place by the sofa, the father parted the golden hair upon the sick girl's forehead, and anxiously questioned Mrs. Septimus respecting the illness.

As the night came on, the little one grew wild and restless, and what the mother had taken to be but a slight childish ailment, began to assume a

form that added anxiety where it was hardly needed. The doctor had been, and spoken seriously, and the medicine he had sent had been administered; but the fever seemed to increase, for the child grew worse, starting from fitful sleeps, and calling for sister Lucy to take something away from her. Septimus looked weakly from face to face for comfort, and then wandered about the room, wringing his hands, and trying to think this new trouble some horrible dream.

And so days passed—days of trouble and anxiety—during which Mrs. Septimus forgot her own ailments, and watched and nursed in turn with Lucy. The doctor had talked, as so many doctors will talk, in an indefinite strain, which left the anxious parents in a state of doubt and bewilderment, though it never occurred to Septimus Hardon that so great an affliction could fall upon him as that he should lose his little one.

About a week after the seizure, Mrs. Septimus was watching by the child, who, after partaking eagerly of some tea, had apparently dropped off to sleep.

"Take little Tom down into the office," whispered Mrs. Hardon, "perhaps she will sleep awhile if we keep her quiet."

So Septimus Hardon, looking dazed and worn with mental anxiety, took his boy in his arms, and Lucy being asleep after watching nearly all night, he left Mrs. Septimus with the sick child, and carried the little fellow down into the dirty, unused office, where, taking advantage of his father's abstraction, the child proceeded to make a heap of type upon the floor, thoroughly covering himself with the black dust, and even going so far as to try the flavour of some of the pieces of metal.

At last the little one began to grow tired, and tried to gain the attention of its father—no light task, for, with his face buried in his hands, he was seated at his desk trying to see his way clearly through the future—a task so many of us attempt, and some even fancy we have achieved, but only to find the falseness of our hopes when the days we looked forward to have come upon us.

But the child was at last successful, and as Septimus raised his head from the desk, he became aware of the presence of the old man of a few days before, and apparently as far from prosperity as ever.

"Nothing doing; no work," said Septimus.

"Any little job will do, sir," said the old man.

"Just come to get out of debt, that's all. What's it to be, sir?"

"Another time," said Septimus. "I've—"

A loud cry from above cut short his words, and darting to the door, forgetting his customary indecision, he bounded up the stairs, while, finding himself left with a stranger, the little fellow burst into a dismal wail.

"Oh, Sep, Sep, Sep!" cried his wife, throwing herself into his arms, "is it always to be sorrow; is there always to be a black cloud over our lives?"

Then tearing herself away she frantically caught the child from Lucy, who, pale and frightened, sat nursing.

"Run, run, Lucy!" cried Septimus, hoarsely, as

he caught a glimpse of his blue-eyed darling's face; "the doctor, quick!"

And then, as the frightened girl ran from the room, he threw himself upon his knees beside his sobbing wife, praying that they might be spared this new sorrow. But before the doctor could reach Carey-street, the agonized couple had seen the little weary head cease its restless tossings from side to side, the blue eyes unclose, dilate, and gaze wildly, as if at some wondrous vision; then a plaintive, shuddering sigh passed from the pale lips, and Septimus Hardon and his wife were alone, though they knew it not.

The Rev. Arthur Sterne was at the door as Lucy returned, overtaken by the doctor's brougham at the same moment; but, to the agony of all, the man of medicine gave one glance at the little form in its mother's lap, shook his head, and left the room on tiptoe.

"Oh, sir, Mr. Sterne," cried Lucy, turning, with quivering lips and streaming eyes, to the clergyman—"tell me, tell me," she sobbed, clasping one of his hands in hers—"tell me—is it—is it death?"

There was silence in the room for a few moments; and then, placing his disengaged hand upon the fair head of the weeping girl, the curate, in low reverent tones, but loud enough to thrill the hearts of the living, said—

"No, it is life—the life eternal!"

And now, amidst the bitter sobs of those who mourned, the curate stepped softly from the room, and left the house with bended head. Then there was silence, till a step was heard upon the stairs, which stopped by the partly-closed door, where stood the old compositor, with little Tom asleep in his arms, the bright, soft, golden locks mingling like dashes of sunshine with the old man's ragged, grizzly whiskers. For a few moments the old printer stood gazing into the room, when, waking to the consciousness of the affliction that had befallen its inmates, he turned, and with halting step descended to the office.

At last the recollection of the living came to the stricken mother's heart, and, wildly sobbing as she clasped Lucy in her arms, she asked for her boy.

Half-stunned with this new shock, Septimus Hardon staggered down to where he had left the child, having till his wife spoke forgotten its very existence; but when he reached the office, stricken as he was, he could not but stop to gaze at the group before him. Seated upon a low stool, beneath the dingy skylight of the back office, where the light that filtered through the foul panes looked dim and gloomy, was the old man, with the child in his lap, gazing, too, intently down at the little fair face which so wonderingly looked up into his own—not fearfully, but with a puzzled expression, as if some problem were there that the little brain could not solve; while the biscuit the tiny fist held was hardly touched, but told its own tale of how the old man had carried the child to the nearest baker's for its purchase. The printer's back was towards Septimus as he stood in the doorway, and as he listened the old man was apostrophising the child.

"Why, God bless your little innocent face, this is me, old Matt—Matthew Space—old Quad, as they

call me—a battered, snuff-taking, drinking old scamp; and here have I been these two hours drinking innocence, and feeling my heart swell till it cracked and the scales fell off. Why—save and bless his little heart, sir!" he cried, for the child saw its father and sprang up—"see how good he is! Work's slack, sir; let him stop, for it seems to do one good—it does indeed, sir. Why, how rich you must be!"

Septimus Hardon thought mournfully of the treasure he had just lost, and, taking the child, he hurriedly bore it to its mother, telling the old man to wait.

Matthew Space, compositor, waited until the owner of the office came down, when, friendless as he was, Septimus Hardon was glad to turn even to this rough old waif of the streets in his helplessness.

"Why, I wouldn't do that, sir," said the old man, after listening for some time in silence; "you may want it to-morrow."

"But I want money to-day," cried Septimus, fiercely. "Will you give me money? will the world outside? will anybody here in this city of wealth trust me the money to bury my child? Would you have me go to the parish?"

He stopped, and the animation that had flashed into his face began to fade again, to leave it dull and despairing.

"Why, as to the first, sir," said the old man, "I would, upon my soul, if I had it—I would indeed; but as to the people outside—" and he began to shake his head grimly. "Poor men have no friends, sir—as a rule, you know—as a rule."

"None!" said Septimus, bitterly—"none!"

"But it would be a pity," said the old man; "such a new, well-cut letter too; and you'll get next to nothing for it. Gave 'most half-a-crown a pound for it, I dessay?"

Septimus nodded.

"Thought so, sir, and—well, if you must, sir, I'll help you all the same, and gladly—only too gladly; but I don't like to see it pawned or sold. You helped me, sir, when it was harder with me than ever it was in my life before, sir; and damme, sir, I'll sell my shirt, sir, to help you, if it will do any good. In the morning, then, sir, I'll be here with a barrow."

"A barrow?" said Septimus.

"Yes; you know, type's heavy stuff."

"Matthew Space," said the snuffy old fellow, screwing his face up as with disgust, when he stood once more in Carey-street, "Matthew Space, follower of the profession of noble Caxton, as a rule, sir, I respect you. I don't despise you for your poverty, or your seedy coat, for you are a man of parts and education; but at the present moment, sir, I'm disgusted with you. You have been drinking innocence from the tiny, prattling lips of that little child—God bless it!" he cried earnestly, dashing a maundering tear from one eye—"God bless it! a child like that would have made another man of me; and now that poor fellow has lost one like it. But there, sir, I'm disgusted with your ways: a man does what nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of a thousand wouldn't do—lends you almost

his last shilling—and now, sir, that an opportunity offers of helping him in his trouble, you make empty professions, false promises, and offer to sell your shirt, you humbug you—to sell your shirt, sir, when you haven't got a shirt in the world!

"That's true enough," said the old man, after walking a little way, "true, if it aint decent; but it's a kind of poverty that buttons will always conceal, which they won't if it's a coat; while if there is any thing that looks beggarly it's the want of boots. I'd sooner be without a hat any day in the week. But you're taking fresh copy, Matt Space, before you've finished the old, and leaving out your points."

The old man cocked his hat very fiercely over the left ear, stuck his hands into his coat-tail pockets, and walked on for some distance—"Poor fellow—good sort—trump." All at once he stopped short before a lamp-post, drew his hands from his pockets, and took a pinch of snuff; he then slapped the cold iron upon the shoulder, and, as if addressing the post confidentially, he exclaimed—

"His name's Hardon, sir; but he isn't a hard un. He's as soft as butter, sir; easy as a glove, sir; deep as a halfpenny plate. You might turn him inside out like a stocking. He'd never get on here, he's too honest. Business! why, he's about as business-like as—as—well, sir, as I am. He'd never any business to be in business; but, after all, what's the good of being a business man, and sharp, and knowing, and deep, if it's to be hammering on, beating out money day after day to make a hard case for a man's heart, so as there aint room for a kind thought to get in, or a gentle word to come out?"

Old Matt stuck his hat a little more on one side, and, giving the post a parting slap, he left the freshly-lit light, quivering and winking down at him as he gave it a nod, and then he crossed the road diagonally to the next post, which he favoured as the last.

"Damme, sir," he cried, "don't tell me. I ought to know what the world is, and I think I do. That man's a trump, sir, if I know anything of character. Soft? well, suppose he is. Don't tell me: men were never made to be sharp-edged tools, chiselling and cutting one another as hard as ever they can, while the keenest ones chisel the most. They weren't meant for it; but that's what they are. And what's worse, they do so much under the cloak of religion, and snuffle and cant, and tell you to do the same. Things are all wrong, sir, all wrong; and I'm wrong, and, according to some people, I'm I don't know what; but there, sir—there, I've done."

Old Matt walked to another post, to prove he had not done, and began again; but some one coming along the pavement, he shuffled off to the public-house he frequented in Bell-yard, where he discoursed for long enough upon human nature in general, to the great delight of his audience, till his pint of porter was finished, when he hurried off through the streets to his lodging.

CHAPTER VIII.—THE DOCTOR AND HIS DAME.

"A TOM-CAT, smooth-coated, purring rascal," said old Octavius when he heard the news. "Doctor Hardon, indeed—doctor, bah!"

And many of the townspeople of Somesham, though they did not use Octavius Hardon's lan-

guage, agreed with him in spirit, and sneered at the new doctor's visit to Scotland, and the paragraph that by some means found its way into the paper, congratulating the people on the acquisition to their town of a physician. Of course the doctor himself did not know of its existence until it was pointed out to him at one of the public meetings, when he looked perfectly astonished, and declared that it was a matter that he meant to have kept a profound secret from everybody. However, as it was made so public, and in such a manner, of course he felt himself bound to take steps to inform his friends and patients that the fact of his being a physician should make no difference; that he looked upon the degree merely in the light of an honour; and hoped for many years to come to be the simple country apothecary, in whose humble skill his fellow-townsmen would have confidence. Guinea fees and prescriptions had never been in his thoughts, the honour having been completely thrust upon him, so he said; for he knew that he could command a practice as a country apothecary, while he would have starved as a physician. For he had practised for many years in Somesham, while he was greatly annoyed that his brother Octavius would reside there, as the doctor told his lady, to quarrel with him, and lower him in the eyes of the people. Doctor Hardon had stood at many sick-beds in the district; spoken smooth nothings respecting the various increases in families which took place beneath his watchful eyes; when in every case, whatever the sex, the child was sure to be the finest he had ever seen in the whole course of his career as a medical practitioner. But the doctor had also worn a great many pairs of black kid gloves, and many a long flowing silk scarf upon those other occasions—at those stopping-places of the journey of life; and ill-natured persons had been known to declare that one of Mrs. Hardon's dresses had been composed of these long black-silk strips sewn together. But then people will be ill-natured.

"Thomas Hardon, Esq., M.D.," sat at his breakfast table in his dressing-gown, but his black frock coat lay upon a chair at his side, ready brushed, and the rest of his costume was of the correct doctorial black. He did not even allow himself to sit down in slippers, but wore boots of the most lustrous black until bedtime. Of an imposing presence, with fine grey hair, a good complexion, sufficiently stout, he was the very *acmé* of a quiet family doctor; and even if he was not so skilful as he might have been, there was that in his quiet ease and assumption which often gave confidence and insured faith in trembling patients—matters which had before now worked wonders when the doctor's medicine alone would have failed. The world is much given to taking people at their own value, and undoubtedly, by those who merely looked at the surface, a much higher price would have been set upon the doctor in that imposing suit of black, and that stiffest of stiff white neckcloths, than upon friend Matthew Space in his black shabbiness. But then, of course, the doctor's double gold eyeglass, gold chain, studs, diamond ring, and the shape of his repeater seen through the soft, black kerseymere waistcoat, added weight in people's estimation, without taking into consideration that air of profundity, and shake of

the noble grey head, which implied so much at so little expense of thought. People at Somesham shook their heads with the doctor, and declared him to be a man of worth; while other people there were who shook their heads with his brother Octavius, and considered him a sham.

But people joined in speaking well of his wife—downright, blunt, plain-spoken Mrs. Hardon—who now sat, pale-faced and anxious, opposite to her husband, supplying his wants, while she waited for an answer to her last question, her hand slightly trembling as it held a letter the doctor had lately passed to her.

"You will let me answer this, Tom, won't you?" she said, gently, with all the motherly woman in her tones, and the hard, business, doctor's wife, who often made up his medicines, and even prescribed in simple cases in his absence, gone. "You will let me answer this, Tom?"

The doctor kept his paper before his face, and read on without condescending to reply.

"Tom," she repeated, leaning towards him, "Tom, be tender and gentle now, Tom; and—"

Mrs. Hardon stopped; for a maid had entered the room with a note, which she handed to Mrs. Hardon.

"Confound you!" hissed the doctor, as soon as the door was closed; and then, instead of the mild, beaming doctorial countenance, there was his brother's angry face scowling on his wife—"Confound you! how many times have I told you not to 'Tom' me before the servants? No, *no*, NO! if you will have an answer," he shouted; "let her starve—let her die—let her jump off one of the bridges, if she likes; she left me, and she may suffer for it. She sha'n't come back here to disgrace me in my profession."

Mrs. Hardon was not at all afraid of her husband, and in many of their little matrimonial differences she had been known to come off the better. The blood rose to her cheeks, and she was about to answer angrily, but she checked herself, and, crossing over, laid her hand upon her husband's shoulder.

"Tom!" she whispered.

"D—n! I tell you I won't have it!" roared the doctor.

"Hush!" said Mrs. Hardon, sternly, but with a touch of softness in her voice. "You know I was ill, Tom, when I came back from town last week."

"Well?" said the doctor, shuffling impatiently in his seat.

"I did not tell you the reason, Tom."

"Well, what of that?" said the doctor, savagely.

"Oh, Tom!" she said, her voice breaking as she sank at his feet, "I saw her—I met her. She passed me as I was going to my cab, wild-eyed, pale, worn-looking; and, oh, Tom, if you had seen her too—seen her as I saw her then, when I held out my arms to her, and she fled away shamefaced before me, you would have felt as I did—as I do now—something tugging at your heartstrings, and whispering to you that it was your child that you did not use well, and telling you that if you had done your duty by her she would never have gone to Octavius, and then fled with that base villain. Tom," she continued, softly, "I feel all this. We are getting old,

Tom, and what are we to say at the last hour, what forgiveness can we ask for, if our own child is driven from us? She hurried from me then; but see now how it has made her write. Look at the address here; where is it? some horrible part of—oh, Tom!"

The exclamation was hardly shrieked from Mrs. Hardon's lips before the letter the doctor had snatched from her hand was blazing upon the fire, he fiercely dragging off his dressing-gown, and preparing to put on his black coat; while, the softness gone from her face, Mrs. Hardon stood before him frowning and hard; but, far from noticing her husband's acts, she was gazing introspectively, and trying to recall the address she had so lately read—an address which the more she tried to bring back, the more it seemed to glide from her mind; first a number, then a word, then the whole, and it was gone.

The doctor pulled on his coat by snatches, ejaculated, and went through many of the evolutions favoured by persons who wish to impress others with the fact that they are in a tempestuous passion; but he had resisted the advances made by his wife when she had thrown off the mask that years of worldliness had fixed there, and now she was ready to engage him with his own weapons. As to his real or simulated anger, she valued it not in the least, holding it in the most profound contempt, while a stranger would hardly have believed her to be the same woman who a few minutes before had kneeled at the doctor's feet.

"I want some money before you go out," said Mrs. Hardon, coldly; and the doctor started with surprise at the change the conversation had taken. "I want some money," said Mrs. Hardon in a louder key.

"How much?" said the doctor, calming down as his wife seemed disposed to take the upper hand.

"Twenty-five—thirty pounds," said Mrs. Hardon.

"What for?" said the doctor.

"What for?" said Mrs. Hardon, fiercely. "Not to send away—not for that, but for the tradespeople's bills; since you are so proud of your reputation—your professional reputation—have them cleared off. Richards has sent twice, and threatens proceedings," and she held out the note the maid had brought in. "And now I insist upon knowing how you stand. I will not be kept here in the dark over these speculations. I know matters are going wrong; and do you suppose that I will sit by like a child and see ruin come upon my home—I, who was always trusted to keep your books and purse, until you became a physician? There is something wrong, Thomas Hardon, or there would not always be this pinching and holding back of every sovereign. You drive me from your side—me, the wife of five-and-thirty years—when I would be the loving woman. Now, then, I will be the firm woman of the world, and be satisfied upon these points at issue. You had better write me a cheque at once; for I will not be disgraced by the tradespeople, since we are to stand so upon our dignity."

Doctor Hardon looked viciously at his wife, spoiling his generally placid countenance to a degree that, had one of his best patients seen him then, it would have been a serious loss to the doctor and a

gain to the rival practitioner; but he made no movement towards drawing the cheque for which Mrs. Hardon stood waiting, till, seeing that nothing was to be gained, she left the room in anger; but the next minute she had returned, to once more lay her hand gently upon the doctor's arm.

"Have you a heart, Tom?" she whispered. "Is our old age to be an old age of regret? Think of Octavius and his son; look at his desolate, wretched life, and don't let ours be quite the same."

Mrs. Hardon had had a hard battle with self, and crushed down the angry feelings that had been fighting for exit; for there was the thought of her child in her heart—maternity asserting itself and thrusting aside in its greatness all that was petty and contemptible; but as she stood there appealing to the doctor the struggle grew harder. Obstinate, bitter, cruel, the doctor masked all beneath his cold, calm, professional aspect, treating the weeping woman with a cutting indifference that roused her indignation at last; and to conceal her anger she hurried from the room, but this time not to return.

The doctor may have had a heart, but it was thoroughly unmoved by all that his wife had said; in fact, the appeal had come at a wrong time, since the same post which brought the letter he had passed over to Mrs. Hardon had given him other letters whose contents he so thoroughly knew that he had not even opened them, but, glancing at their directions, thrust them hastily into his pocket, where they acted as so much fuel to feed the fire of his wrath. There was something so unmistakable in the particularly distinct handwriting upon the envelopes—something so very blue about the paper—that, expecting unpleasant communications, the doctor detected them at a glance, and mentally he went over the contents.

The fact was the doctor was short of cash, and that through more than one unfortunate speculation in which he had embarked. Like a great many more men of moderate income, he had been bitten with the desire to increase it, though the bite came in the first instance from his wife, who scolded him fiercely when, after the M.D. honour had been thrust upon him, he gave up the union practice, which entailed the loss of the regular salary of one hundred pounds per annum. The doctor said that it was not becoming for a physician to be the medical attendant of the parish; and Mrs. Hardon, who was then in a worldly, everyday phase, declared that it was "all fiddlesticks' ends," when there was his cheque regularly at certain times, while the greater part of the work could be done by the assistant, who would do very well for the poor people. It was a sin and a shame, she declared, though how connected with fiddlesticks' ends was best known to herself. There was, however, something relating to the musical science in the matter, for Mrs. Doctor Hardon kept harping upon the same string until the doctor snapped it by furiously threatening her, if another word was said about it—threats that Mrs. Hardon noticed so much that she certainly held her tongue; and she held her hand too, and tried to annoy the doctor by keeping a bad table, which she said so great a loss every year necessitated. Poor woman! she little knew that

the time would come when such economy would be forced upon her. What, she asked the doctor, was honour without money? What was the use of her being a physician's wife if they had nothing to support it with? And then, too, for him to be such an ass—the doctor started, and puffed out his cheeks at this—"Yes, ass," said Mrs. Hardon, "as to play into your adversary's hand like that, when he was on the verge of ruin, as everybody said, and could not have kept on another six months—for you to throw the union practice and a hundred a year into his lap, and supply him with the material for carrying on the war!"

Mrs. Doctor Hardon spoke of the rival practitioner—a poor, gentlemanly man, who had set up some years before in the dusty town of Somesham, and had been fighting ever since with difficulties; for, as in all small country towns in this land of liberty, every new-comer was looked upon as an intruder—a foreigner—and one who will probably interfere with the fine old conservative notions of the place. They don't want him, and they won't have him if they can help it. He is clever, perhaps; but they don't want clever people, and they would prefer being half killed by the old practitioner to being cured by the new. Trade or profession, it is just the same; and perhaps the acts of the town are only the acts of the country in miniature. Hospitality we have in plenty, and our share of the virtues, no doubt; but truly we English have most strongly in us the propensity for turning our backs upon those who are trying to fight their way on, until they can manage to do without help, when we turn round, smiling with the features that frowned before, pat the successful man upon the back, and say, "Well done!"

Mr. Brande, "the new man," as he was called, had found all this, and had been ready to despair again and again through the many years he had been trying to make a practice; but now the turning-point had come in the honours of Thomas Hardon, Esq., M.D.; not that he had reaped much present advantage, and it was doubtful if he would have had the practice at all if Doctor Hardon had not had immediate want for a hundred and fifty pounds, and, trusting to Mr. Brande's honour as a gentleman, offered to throw up the parish work on condition of receiving that sum, which Mr. Brande gave him in bills, and, what was more, screwed, economized, and met them as they fell due. But Mrs. Doctor Hardon did not know this, nor yet the extent of the liabilities her lord had incurred; while the deeper he sank in that black, clinging mire of debt, the more reticent he grew.

CHAPTER IX.—MR. PAWLEY'S PERFORMANCE.

"SUCH a beautiful, well-cut letter, too!" said old Matt Space, as he stood looking at the empty type-rack from whence the cases had been taken to furnish money for Septimus Hardon's present expenses. "In such good order, too. Puts me in mind of being so low down that I had to sell my own stick. Fellow always seems so badly off when he gets selling his tools."

A tap at the door, following the sound of wheels, interrupted the old man's soliloquy, and going to

the door he admitted the undertaker, who had just arrived with his shabby Shillibeer hearse and mourning-coach in 'one, with which he performed the economic funerals so frequent in his district.

"Here you are, then," said old Matt, grimly surveying the new-comer.

"Yes, here we are," said the undertaker, in a subdued, melancholy tone.

And then he drew out a pocket-handkerchief and wiped his eye, as if to remove a tear—in fact, he did remove a tear—though not sorrow-shed, for Mr. Pawley was in very good spirits just then; but he had an eye afflicted with a watery weakness, which necessitated the constant application of a handkerchief, and this had passed with a certain class of people for the manifestation of sorrow for their griefs.

Some said that this eye had been a little fortune to him. Perhaps it had; but doubtless the crowded courts clustering round Lincoln's-inn had done more to keep up the incessant "rat-tat-tat" heard in his shop—a sound as if grim Death were tapping with those bony fingers of his at the door.

"Such a feeling man!" said Mrs. Sims, who was always at home upon such occasions as this, and had now come to mind Septimus Hardon's boy, and help. "If she could be of service, leastways; for it's few berrins take place about here, mum, that they don't send for me," she said, with a sniff, and the corner of her apron to her eye.

"Here you are, then," said old Matt to the undertaker.

"Yes, here we are," said Mr. Pawley; "but you aint a-going, are you?"

"Well, who said I was?" said Matt, gruffly. "You're a-going, aint you? and that's enough for you."

Mr. Pawley took so much pride in his funerals being properly performed, that going himself did not seem enough for him, and he continued to gaze doubtfully over a very uncomfortable white cravat, one of which the bow was supposed to be tied behind, giving him a good deal the aspect of a man who had been decapitated, and then had his head secured in its place by a bandage.

But old Matt did not give the undertaker an opportunity for a long inspection of his shabby black clothes; for having announced the grim functionary, that gentleman went up the creaking stairs upon the points of his toes to proceed with the duties he had in hand; while, as old Matt stood in the passage, watching his long black body, it seemed to him that the stairs cracked and creaked mournfully, as if resenting the feet laid upon them, in anticipation of a heavier descent.

But there was to be no heavy load for them to bear this time, for it was but a little coffin—a little white coffin that had been gazed into for the last time, where the gentle waxen features seemed to wear a smile, so sad, speaking such a tender farewell in its sweetness, that Lucy Grey sobbed aloud with the parents, until Mrs. Sims entered the room, whispered to Septimus, and then they all slowly passed out, to give place to Mr. Pawley. And then, standing in the next room, Mrs. Septimus, weak and ailing, almost fainted as she heard the harsh noise

of the driver as it slipped first in one and then another of the screws.

But now the last screw had been tightened, the light burden placed in the receptacle, and Mrs. Sims, quite a regular aid to Mr. Pawley, arranged the scarf upon Septimus Hardon's hat; pinned and tied the hoods and cloaks upon mother and daughter; and then, in a simple but feeling way, wept many a salt tear into her black alpaca apron, sniffing terribly the while. Mr. Pawley, satisfied in his mind that the respectability of his performance was not to be damaged by so doubtful a character as the old compositor, stood holding open the door of the carriage with one hand, wiping his eye with the other, and awaiting the mourners' descent.

For this was no grand funeral; there had been no mutes standing with draped staves at the door; there was no squadron of men with scarves and brass-tipped truncheons; no tray of black plumes to be carried in advance; no high-stepping, long-tailed black horses, with velvet housings and tossing heads; nothing to make a funeral imposing and attractive. But there were spectators even for this: inhabitants of Carey-street were stealthily watching from door-steps, or from the corners of windows, as if afraid of intruding upon the mourners' sorrow; a knot of dirty children from Bennett's-rents had collected, many of whom toiled beneath shawl-wrapped burdens of heavy babies, almost equal to themselves in bulk; two women stood upon the opposite side with arms wrapped in their aprons; a ticket-porter, in apron and badge, leaned against the nearest lamp-post; the apple-woman at the corner did something unusual, she left her basket, knocked the ashes out of her short black pipe, and then rubbed a tear—a bright, gem-like tear—off her poor old cheek, withered as one of her own pippins, before placing her pipe in her pocket, and leaning with arms akimbo against the railings to see the hearse pass with a little customer of hers, for whom she had always picked out the best lot, and in her simple, homely way called down heavenly favour with a hearty "God bless you!" An old law-writer, a man who reckoned life as a long brief in so many folios, old and snuffy, and shabby almost as Matt himself, walked by house and hearse to the office where he worked, pretending to whistle; but no sound came, and he blew his nose in a way that raised an echo in the silent street as soon as he was a few yards past the place; even the policeman, beating his Berlin gloves together, quietly sent off the children gathered in the way, and posted them at a distance, that they might not annoy the sad party so soon to leave the house.

And now a tall, dark woman, carrying a child, appeared upon the scene, and stood with dimmed eye watching till the mourners descended, when, catching sight of Septimus Hardon's bent form, she stepped forward eagerly; but only to shrink back shivering, as she clutched her babe to her breast, pressing her lips upon its plump cheek, while an air of wonderment came into the woman's face as the announcement above the door now caught her eye:—"S. Hardon, Legal and General Printer."

For there was sorrow in Carey-street that day—sorrow of a novel kind. All the neighbourhood

knew why the blinds were down at Hardon's; for all knew the tall, graceful girl who led about the two golden-haired children that seemed so out of place in the legal region; all knew that one of these little ones had passed away—that the little flower, sweet and fragrant, so lately blooming in the cold harsh place, and raising its heaven-whispering head amongst them, had been cut down by the cold winds that swept the weary waste. "Our client" had stopped at this oasis in the desert he was crossing, for he had often paused to look up at the golden head at the upper window, gazed at it awhile, and then passed on, refreshed and gladdened in heart. Every dweller in the neighbourhood had had a kind word or look for Lucy's charges; and there was a sun in those golden tresses, a warm light, that would often melt the icy frost of some old lawyer's countenance, and bring there a smile of pleasure. But a month before, two men were passing Carey-street with Punch, bound westward to the district where there is less constraint and mind-engrossing; and the man who bore the show, following the usage which to him was second nature, looked up at the dirty windows with wandering eye, caught sight of the blue-eyed fairy, looked at her with doubt for an instant, and then pitched his theatre, to the astonishment of his drum-and-panpipe "pardner," who would as soon have thought of playing in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey.

"Jest five minutes," whispered his mate, pointing upwards.

When, as if by magic, the pipes squeaked, the drum rolled, raising up the wondering ghosts of echoes from amidst the pouncy dust of ages, while the yellow, torn green baize fell, to conceal the motive power of the puppets; and then for "jest five minutes" "our client" was startled, the parchments in the offices crackled, dust floated from ledges out upon the murky air, and the sanctity of the place was broken by the ribald jokes of our old friend. Then, just as an astonished troop of children came with a rush out of Bennett's-rents, up went the green curtain; there came a friendly nod from one of the men, who placed himself, Atlas-like, beneath his drum, a broad grin from the other at the child's delight, and then off due west.

And now the change had come: the cold blast that sweeps down Carey-street had been colder and keener; the fragile flower-stalk was broken; the white coffin was in its place, the mourners in the coach; the door banged gently, for the wood had warped. Mr. Pawley had climbed beside his red-nosed driver, and sat wiping his eye; while the poor old broken-kneed black horse ambled and shambled off with its head down, as if ashamed of the false tail that it knew was fastened to the crupper of its harness.

Then the rest—the sad rite, the solemn words, the swelling hearts aching to leave so sweet a form in so cold and damp a bed, loth to believe that what they had loved could turn to corruption, and then to the dust of the earth. Then back to the shabby carriage, whose driver had refreshed himself with gin, which attacked his nose; while the horse yet twisted an obstinate wisp of hay that hung sideways in his bit, and would not be ground into nutriment. Once more the banging of the door, and Mr. Pawley

up beside the driver, with his grief still unassuaged; while as the poor beast that drew the carriage shambled back, his load was so little lightened that he knew not the difference.

The house in Carey-street had looked sad and gloomy for days past, for even the lodgers had drawn down their blinds, and ascended the stairs carefully and even stealthily, speaking, too, in whispers; but now the light was freely admitted, and Mrs. Sims had blown up a good fire, only stopping to sniff, and drop a tear or two upon the bellows now and then, the last being a domestic implement that she had run home to the Square and fetched for the occasion. The tea was prepared, and she had made what she called the most of the place—not that that was much—ready for the mourners' return; while old Matt was ruining the knees of his trousers by making himself a horse, and crawling up and down the dirty printing-office floor with the little boy upon his back. The rooms looked almost cheerful now, for, save in the returned mourners' hearts, all was over, and the solemn scene, the dark, damp grave, the catching of the breath as the first earth fell, the long last look at the white coffin—all things of the past.

Old Matthew Space was a wise man in his way; and as soon as he thought that there had been time for the changing of habiliments—that is to say, about a quarter of an hour after Mr. Pawley had presented his account, been paid, and taken his departure, offering old Matt sixpence, which he indignantly refused to take—he put on a bright face, and took the little fellow in his charge upstairs, crowing and chattering with delight at riding upon the old man's shoulders.

"No, thankee, sir," said the old man, in answer to Septimus Hardon's invitation to stay to tea.

And as he declined he glanced down at his clothes.

"I did not ask the clothes," said Septimus, warmly; "but the man who has shown sympathy in this weary time of trouble, and God knows I did not expect to find friends where I have," muttered the dejected man, who looked ten years older, while at times his eyes wandered in a weary, abstracted way about the room, and his hands were wrung together, till Lucy came to his side and spoke to him, when the lost, helpless look would pass off, and he would brighten up for a few minutes.

"Such a beautiful, well-cut letter, though!" muttered old Matt, as he took the chair placed for him by Mrs. Sims, when the little fellow forced himself off his mother's lap, and climbed upon the old man's knee.

"You must hold up, mum," whispered Mrs. Sims to poor, broken-down, invalid Mrs. Septimus. "I know what it all is; for when I lived in the Rents, mum, I lost four; and all within three years."

"You did!" said Mrs. Septimus, laying a tender hand upon the poor woman's arm.

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Sims. "It was before I went to mind the house in the Square, and used to wash; but it was sich work, mum! Nowhere to dry except a bit of leads, and the strings tied across the room, and the blacks allus a-coming down like a shower; while every drop o' water had to be fetched from right at the bottom of the house. One was

obliged to do it, though, for times were very hard just then; but having so much washing aint good and healthy for children, let alone being stived up so close. You see, m, it's a bad place to live in, them Rents; there's too many in a house, and there's so much wants doing; but then, when you're a bit behind with your rent, you can't grumble, or there's your few bits of sticks taken, and plenty more glad to have your room. But the way the poor little children is snatched off there, mum, 's terrible, though I do sometimes say as it's a happy release. Mr. Pawley, mum, he 'ave told me that them Rents is as good as an annuity to him; for, you see, though it isn't a big place, there's a many families in each house; and where there's families, mum, there's mostly children."

Mrs. Septimus sighed bitterly at the last word; while, poor woman, she was too much intent upon her cares to notice the wisdom of the speech.

"But you hold up now, mum, there's a good creature. I know it's very hard, but then we all has to suffer alike; and you've got to reckon what you owes to that poor dear child there, and young miss, and the master."

As for Septimus Hardon, he was talking in an abstracted way to old Matt, who was discussing business matters, and urging energetic measures in the office. But talking to Septimus Hardon was a difficult matter, and put you much in mind of catching a grazing horse: you held a bait before him, and then gradually edged him up into a corner, when, just as you thought you had him, he was off and away full gallop to another part of the mental field; and so the work had to be done all over again. Old Matt found it so; and, after several times over waking to the fact that while he was talking upon one subject Septimus Hardon was thinking upon another, he rose and took his departure.

The Mermaid of Fiction and of Fact.

MR. HENRY LEE, the eminent naturalist, has been writing the following entertaining account of the manatee, in the columns of a daily paper:—Next to the pleasure which the earnest zoologist derives from study of the habits and structure of living animals, and his intelligent appreciation of their perfect adaptation to their mode of life and the circumstances in which they are placed, is the interest he feels in eliminating fiction from truth, whilst comparing the fancies of the past with the facts of the present. As his own knowledge increases, he learns that the descriptions by ancient writers of so-called "fabulous creatures" are rather distorted portraits than invented falsities, and that there is hardly one of the monsters of old which has not its prototype in Nature at the present day. Many of the older naturalists seem to have aimed rather at making their histories sensational than at carefully investigating the credibility or the contrary of the highly-coloured reports brought to them. These were frequently gross exaggerations, but there was a substratum of truth in them; and in the form and movements of animals with which we are familiar we may often recognize the living models of the

bold, broad sketches from Nature from which the old artists drew their showy but untruthful pictures.

For example, the idea of the Lernean Hydra, whose heads grew again when cut off by Hercules, originated from a knowledge of the octopus. Diodorus relates of it that it had a hundred heads. Simonides says fifty; but the generally received statement is that of Apollodorus and Hyginus, that it had only nine, one of which was immortal. Here we have an animal with eight outgrowths from its trunk—the type of an octopus, which is really capable of rapidly developing afresh and replacing by new ones one or all of its limbs, in case of their being amputated or injured. On many sculptured tablets and engraved gems the animal represented as in combat with Hercules is a well-portrayed octopus.

In almost all ages, and in all parts of the world, there has prevailed a belief in the existence of a race of beings uniting the form of a man with that of the fish. The Assyrians were acquainted with it; for on an elaborate sculpture found at Khorsabad by M. Botta is depicted a figure composed of the body and tail of a fish and the upper half of the body of a man. The god Dagon of the Philistines and the goddess Atergatis of the Syrians were worshipped under a similar combination of human and fish-like forms; and the same idea is exemplified in the Tritons of classical mythology.

From north to south the belief in mermen and mermaids has been entertained. Megasthenes reported that the sea which washed Taprobane, the ancient Ceylon, was inhabited by creatures having the appearance of a woman. Ælian stated that there were whales having the form of satyrs. The early Portuguese settlers in India asserted that true mermen were found in those seas; and old Norse legends tell of submarine beings of conjoined human and fish-like form, some of whom have, from time to time, landed on Scandinavian shores, exchanged their fishy extremities for human limbs, and acquired amphibious habits. Not only have poets sung of the wondrous and seductive beauty of the maidens of these aquatic tribes, but many a Jack Tar has come home from sea prepared to affirm on oath that he has seen a mermaid. To the best of his knowledge he has told the truth. He has seen some living being which looked woman at a distance, and his imagination has supplied the rest.

Nevertheless, all such accounts were ridiculed and discredited, until more competent observers recognized in the form and habits of certain aquatic beasts met with in the bays and estuaries of the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, and sub-tropical America, the origin of these "travellers' tales." These were—first, the manatee, which is found in the West Indian Islands, the Gulf of Mexico, and Brazil, and in Africa, in Senegambia, and the Mozambique Channel; second, the dugong, which ranges along the east coast of Africa, Southern Asia, the Bornean Archipelago, and Australia; and third, the rytina, seen by Steller, a Russian zoologist and voyager, in 1741, and which is supposed to have become extinct within twenty-seven years after its discovery, by its having been recklessly and indiscriminately slaughtered. Then science made the *amende honorable* by bestowing on these three

animals the name of the *Sirenia*, and classed them together as a sub-order of the animal kingdom.

It has, however, been found difficult to determine to which order these *Manatida* are most nearly allied. In shape they most clearly resemble the whales and seals. But the cetacea are all carnivorous, whereas the manatee and its relatives live entirely on vegetable food. Although, therefore, Dr. J. E. Gray has classed them with the cetacea in his British Museum catalogue, other anatomists, as Professor Agassiz, Professor Owen, and Dr. Murie, regard their resemblance to the whales as rather superficial than real, and conclude from their organization that they ought either to form a group apart or be classed with the pachyderms—the hippopotamus, tapir, &c.—with which they have the nearest affinities, and to which they seem to have been more immediately linked by the now lost genus, *Dinotherrium*.

There is a strong likeness between the manatee and the dugong. They both have a cylindrical body like that of a seal, but instead of hind limbs, which are entirely wanting, there is a broad tail, flattened horizontally, which in the manatee is rounded, and in the dugong is forked like that of a whale. The body of the manatee is broader in proportion to its length and depth than that of the dugong.

In a paper read before the Royal Society, July 10, 1821, on a manatee sent to London in spirits by the Duke of Manchester, then Governor of Jamaica, Sir Everard Home remarked of this greater lateral expansion, that as this animal feeds on plants that grow at the mouths of great rivers, and the dugong upon those met with in the shallows amongst small islands in the Eastern seas, the difference of form would make it more buoyant and better fitted to float in fresh water. The skin of the manatee is as hard and thick as that of an elephant, and of nearly the same colour when dry, though it is sooty black in hue when wet. On its surface are a few slender hairs. The head is conical, and without neck or mark of depression at its junction with the body. The muzzle is large and fleshy, and at the upper part of its extremity are two nostrils. The eyes are small. At each side of the upper lip is a tuft of strong bristles. The mammae of the female, which are greatly distended during the period of lactation, are situated very differently from those of the whales, being just beneath the pectoral fins. These paws or limbs are much more flexible and freer in their movements than those of the cetæ, and are sufficiently prehensile to enable the animal to hold her young one to her breast with one of them, and to gather food between the palms or inner surfaces of both. Like the whales, the manatee is a warm-blooded mammal, breathing by lungs, and it is therefore obliged to come to the surface at frequent intervals for respiration. As it breathes through nostrils at the end of its muzzle, instead of, like most of the whales, through a blow-hole on the top of its head, its habit is to rise vertically in the water, with the head and fore part of the body exposed above the surface, and often to remain in this position for some minutes. When seen thus, with head and breast bare, and clasping its young one to its

body, it presents an almost human appearance. When approached or disturbed it will dive; the tail and hinder portion of the body come into view, and we see that if there was little of the "*mulier formosa superne*," at any rate "*desinit in piscem*." It has thence been called by the Spaniards and Portuguese the "woman fish," and by the Dutch the "manetje," or mannikin. The dugong, having the muzzle more bristly, is named by the latter the "baardmanetje," or "little bearded man."

Many attempts have been made to exhibit the manatee alive in captivity, but hitherto without much success. In April, 1866, one was brought from Porto Rico, by Captain Sawyer, of the steamer *Tasmanian*. It died six days before its arrival at Southampton; but by the thoughtful care of the purser of the ship, Mr. Edward Greey, its body was preserved, and proved to be most valuable. Its anatomical dissection forms the subject of a masterly paper by Dr. Murie, in the eighth volume of the "*Transactions of the Zoological Society*." Another endeavour was made soon after this by Mr. Clarence Bartlett, son of the well-known superintendent of the Zoological Gardens, Regent's Park; but unfortunately he experienced very rough weather on the voyage, and his manatee, after having been nearly washed overboard more than once, died two days before the arrival of the ship in England. A third trial was more successful. In August, 1875, a manatee arrived safely at the Zoological Gardens from Demerara, but it lived for less than a week. The great difficulty is to provide for this animal a supply of its proper food. This naturally consists of succulent aquatic plants, especially one called the *pana brava*, which floats on the borders of streams. For this no satisfactory substitute has yet been found, though the animal will sometimes eat lettuces, vegetable marrows, watercresses, &c. One which was kept alive nearly three months in the menagerie of the Zoological Society of Philadelphia preferred to anything else a variety of the water plant *Potamogeton*.

It is greatly to be hoped that the authorities of the Royal Aquarium, Westminster, will be able to preserve in health the valuable specimen of the manatee which, after strong competition with other would-be purchasers, they have had the good fortune and enterprise to secure. The creature is so gentle and docile that it may be expected to become very tame if it lives. That which was brought to the Regent's Park in 1875 took food from its keeper's hand a few hours after its arrival. And Aldrovandus tells us, on the authority of Franciscus de Gomara, an old Spanish historian, that a small manatee, caught off the Island of Hispaniola, and placed in an inland lake, would come to the shore when called by its name, "Mato," take food from the hand, and, permitting boys and even men to mount on its back, would swim off with them to the other side of the lake. Mr. Barnum, in 1862, succeeded in taming a white whale so far that it would allow itself to be harnessed to a car, and draw a young lady seated therein round its tank. As the manatee is quite as intelligent and teachable as a whale, we may possibly see this mermaid rivalling his relative, the elephant at the Zoological Gardens,

in giving little boys a ride on his back. This would please the public, but the lessons that men of science would learn from it at the same time would be invaluable.

Table Sketches.

HOST. Welcome to a dinner which, after all, I feared to make too far north, lest your southern palate should fail to appreciate sheep's head broth and haggis. I have, however, given you a cock-a-leekie, and there is another soup for which I hold a good recipe—Bouillabaisse.

Connoisseur. You don't mean to say you have ventured on that? I haven't tasted it since I was at the *Trois Frères*, a dozen years ago or more. You remember Thackeray's poem in its praise?

Host. Who does not? But you will be asking what it has to do with a north country dinner, to which I answer nothing, except that it is largely indebted to haddocks for its flavour.

Hostess. Come, gentlemen, while you discuss your dinner, dinner is awaiting discussion.

Connoisseur (tasting his soup). Admirable! Pardon me, but your confidences invited remark, and there are moments when it would be little less than unmannerly to refrain from expressive appreciation.

Viveur. I take it that we have constituted ourselves a committee of taste on the present occasion at least. But I keep to the cock-a-leekie; let us be due north or nothing.

Host. Ah, you should have looked into the black sheep's face then, and tasted the haggis as Meg Dods would have made it.

Guest. Yes, but that would have been going due Christopher north. Do you remember the glorious chuckle of enjoyment, and the glorification of cookery with which he wrote that essay in "old Ebony"?

Host. It was a wonderful example of the professor and the man—subtle, witty, and even poetical.

Madame. But surely the philosopher (you allude to Professor Wilson, of course) did not enter into the question of cookery?

Viveur. Oh! did he not? While his essay on carving is perhaps one of the best things that ever appeared in a Review.

Hostess. It was a review of Meg Dods's book, I think?

Connoisseur. Yes; and I remember that he declares "there is not in the whole range of English literature a sounder sentence" than where Meg says: "It is well known that a person of any refinement will eat much more when his food is carved in handsome slices, and not too much at once, than when a piece clumsily cut is put on his plate. To cut warm joints fairly and smoothly, neither in slices too thick nor in such as are finically thin, is all that is required of the carver of meat, whether boiled or roasted."

Host. Thanks for your hint. I will remember it when I serve the haunch of mutton.

Viveur. Scotch, of course; but you were going to tell us of Christopher North's praise of haggis.

Host. Well, it is not easy to repeat; but he says

of it:—"It takes possession of the palate with a despotism that might be expected from 'the great chieftain of the pudding race.' You forget, for the time being, all other tastes. The real dishes before you seem fictitious. You see them, but heed them not, any more than ocular spectra. Your very eyes have a gust, and your ears are somewhat dull of hearing—trying to taste. You continue to eye the collapsed bag with grateful affection, command the waiter to behave kindly to it when removed, and follow it out of the room with a silent benediction."

Madame. But, after all, what is a haggis?

Hostess. "Guid guide us!"—and has all that poetry been wasted for want of an exposition. Listen to Meg Dods. "Parboil a sheep's pluck and a piece of good, lean beef. Grate the half of the liver, and mince the beef, the lights, and the remaining half of the liver. Take of good beef suet half the weight of this mixture, and mince it with a dozen small, firm onions. Toast some oatmeal before the fire for hours, till it is of a light brown colour and perfectly dry. Less than two tea-cups full of meal will do for this meat. Spread the mince on a board, and strew the meat lightly over it, with a high seasoning of pepper, salt, and a little cayenne, well mixed. Have a haggis bag, perfectly clean, and see that there is no thin part in it, else your whole labour will be lost by its bursting. Put in the meat with as much good beef gravy, or strong broth, as will make it a thick stew. Be careful not to fill the bag too full, but allow the meat room to swell; add the piece of a lemon, or a little good vinegar; press out the air, and sew up the bag; prick it with a large needle, when it first swells in the pot, to prevent breaking; let it boil, but not violently, for three hours."

Viveur. It requires a cultivated palate to appreciate it, no doubt.

Connoisseur. Yes; just as it needs practice to become fond of "curiously dry sherry."

Guest. But Bouillabaisse, delicious as it is, I can't tell what is made of.

Host. It is of French extraction, of course. This is how ours is made:—Four or five pounds of all sorts of small fish, both fresh and salt water, including haddocks, whiting, soles, small plaice, mullets, roach, dace, carp, if you can get them—in fact, almost anything small and delicate. To these add twenty or thirty mussels, three or four onions sliced, three or four peeled tomatoes, cut in quarters and divested of the seeds, a slice or two of peeled lemon, and a bag containing whole pepper, a clove of garlic, a bit of orange or lemon rind, a salt-spoonful of saffron, and half a capsicum pod. Put all this into a saucepan, and boil it in liquor composed of three parts water, one part oil, and one part light white wine—say Chablis. Cook it for about an hour, and, just before it is done, throw in a handful of mixed parsley. The true Bouillabaisse is served all together, on slices of stale bread, in a deep dish; but, you see, we have given it you as a soup, and the fish with the rest of the liquor comes on as part of a second course. I candidly confess that the bones of the fish are a great objection, but *chacun à son goût*. Try some Sauterne.

Madame. But to return to your national haggis. I should think anybody would prefer hotch-potch.

Guest. What, the exquisite combination of fresh, sweet mutton, and early summer vegetables, of which Wilson says, "The truly delightful thing about hotch-potch is that it comes in with the season of green peas"? At hotch-potch we always think of the beautiful line of Burns—

"My heart rejiced in Nature's joy."

Host. Yes, that's hotch-potch; but to-day, you know, we are to try another dish—Lancashire "Hot-pot," which was to be my test of the ability to please you; and here it comes. You had the recipe when we last met; and now *experientia docet*.

[There is a profound silence, except of knives and plates, for four minutes, and then, with a burst of enthusiasm, *Guest* rises, and, quite out of all propriety, proposes the health of the hostess, and sits down to a second helping.]

Connoisseur. We have dined. Please to pass the claret.

Viveur. Well, no; there is a haunch of mutton, and this claret is superb.

"Firm as a rock the Caledonian stood;
Old was his mutton, and his claret good."

I always regarded that as a sensible protest against lamb, which is superstitiously eaten as a luxury by English people, and garnished with mint sauce—evidently a custom derived from the lamb and bitter herbs of the old Passover.

Host. Well, I shall give you nothing but ptarmigan to follow the mutton. Ptarmigan are Scotch, of course.

"His eagle eye
The ptarmigan in snow could spy,"

for instance—and they are as good as grouse to my thinking. In fact, they are grouse.

Guest. Capital for a game pie, I believe.

Connoisseur. No doubt; but game pies are mostly a delusion and a snare. There is a *chef* at Cambridge who knows how to make one; but few people will take the trouble, and would rather give their friends *paté de fois gras* than go to the expense.

Viveur. Well, *paté de fois gras* is becoming common enough now; it will doubtless soon be classed with black puddings.

Guest. And well it may be; there was an amusing article the other day in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, giving a graphic description of the manner of preparing the geese so that they may develop diseased livers in order to supply the market with these dainties.

Host. Why, what do they do?

Guest. I should fear the anger of the ladies if I read it to you, but our conversation has been so strictly gastronomical, that if you insist—

Hostess and Mesdames. Oh, yes, by all means let us hear it.

Madame. Do you remember Mr. Jarndyce, in "Bleak House," offering the little girl *paté de fois gras* for her lunch, saying, "Here is a pie made of the livers of fat geese; would you like some of it?"—and on her refusal, throwing it out of the carriage window?

Guest. The best thing to do with it. Hear what a visitor says of a hundred geese in process of "ripening" in an establishment at Strasburg:—

"Their proprietor explains that they are all nine months old, and have cost him, lean as they are, two francs fifty cents a-piece; he then makes a sign to half-a-dozen bare-armed girls, who speak no French, and, amid considerable commotion and protest from the remaining ninety-four, six geese are collared and marched away to a cellar half underground, where wide and sloping stone tables are arranged in tiers as far as the eye can see. In the murky light by some twenty air-holes, one can at first distinguish nothing; but by-and-by it becomes apparent that hundreds of geese are already lying strapped on their backs on the upper tiers, and gasping hysterical things—probably words of love and encouragement—to one another. Our business being for the moment at the lower tables, the six girls take each her goose, lay him gently but firmly on the stone, so that his tail just projects over the ledge, and then tie down his wings, body, and legs with plaited whipcord, the legs and wings being well spread out, to paralyze anything like vigorous gymnastics. The bird's neck is left free, and it seems that during the first three days he makes a violent use of it; but towards the fourth day he arrives at the consciousness that by struggling and croaking he does nothing to amend his lot, and from that time he may be trusted to lie still for the next seven weeks; that is, till the hour of release and killing. Without pausing to see all the hundred geese tied down, we may go at once to the upper tiers, where the birds that have been lying for three, five, or six weeks, respectively are taking their ease, and waiting to be fed by half a dozen other Alsatian girls laden with large wooden bowls. Each of these bowls is filled with a thick white paste, made of parboiled maize, chest-nuts, and buckwheat, most nourishing; and the mode of administering the dinner is for the girl to catch the goose by the neck, open his bill with a little squeeze, and then ram three or four balls of the paste down his throat with her middle finger. The goose, having thus refreshed, resumes his slanting position, and digests till the next time of feeding, which arrives about two hours after, the meals being about six a day. But now we have done with the women; for a pensive man—a connoisseur in the obesity of geese—breaks upon the scene, climbs upon the topmost tier of all, and proceeds to examine the birds that may be "ripe." He has an eye as judicious as that of a gardener inspecting melons; and his is the responsible task of pronouncing what birds would die a natural death within twenty-fours, if not despatched beforehand. If a goose dies a natural death he is good for nothing. He must be unstrapped and executed at the precise psychological moment when Nature is growing tired of supporting him; and the knack of detecting that moment can only come of long practice, and fetches the possessor wages as large as those of a diamond valuer. Our pensive functionary has not been a minute on the table before he certifies four geese ready for the slaughter. All four of them have stomachs of the size of pumpkins, and from what one can gather of their broken remarks, it is a sincere relief to these when a couple of male acolytes climb up, loose their bonds, and bear them out of the cellar to a pent-house across the

yard, full of knives and chopping-blocks. A click with the chopper on the neck of each, a rip with the knife, and, in less than five minutes after their transfer, the carcasses of the four victims are lying in a heap, while their livers are being conveyed with all respect and care to the truffling-house. The carcasses, shrivelled out of all knowledge, are sold for about eightpence apiece to peasants, who make soup out of them; the livers are first cleaned, then put to scale, and our four geese are declared grand birds, all of them, for their livers weigh from two and a half to three pounds each. The next step is to take each liver and to lard it with truffles in the proportion of half a pound of truffles to one pound of liver, and then to convey it to an ice-house, where it remains on a marble slab for a week, that the truffle perfume may thoroughly permeate it. At the end of a week each liver, being removed, is cut into the size required for the pot it is to fill, and introduced into that pot between two thin layers of mincemeat, made of the finest veal and bacon fat, both truffled like the liver itself; and one inch depth of the whitish lard is then spread over the whole, that none of the savour may escape in baking. The baking takes about five hours, and absorbs all the energies of four intelligent Frenchmen in white, who relay each other, to see that the fire never blazes too high or sinks too low. When the cooking is over, nothing remains but to pack the dainty either in tin, or earth, or wood, according as it may be required for home or foreign consumption, and to ship it to the four points of the compass. A question may here arise as to how many of the geese die naturally before the above processes can be carried out to a happy end; but it is a pleasing fact that few geese die, and those only ill-regulated birds which had unsound constitutions or no ambition for high destinies. It is on record, however, that a member of the Society for the Suppression of Cruelty to Animals once arrived in Strasburg, armed with the Laroche-foucauld law, and endeavoured to cope with the pie factors; but he was worsted, and there are strong reasons for suspecting that he was a Socialist."

Host. My friends, would none o' ye like a liqueur o' brandy, or here is some real Glenlivet.

Madame. Why, surely you gentlemen are not going to drink before dessert. Oh! I see, the *palé de fois gras*. Yes. Well, now I have a favour to ask of you all. I cannot give a dinner party, but will you all come to a thick tea (as they call it in Lancashire) next month, and I will promise you two or three good dishes?

Connoisseur. I will accept for us all, madame; for I know your nice little French dishes; and as to tea—well, you have still some of that '64 Bordeaux left, I think.

Viveur. Don't despise tea, because you so seldom get it good. *Apropos* of tea; here is an enigma that you may not have heard before:—

"Across the sea my second brings my first,
My first assuages half a nation's thirst,
Of thee my whole forms an important part,
Thou art not science, but thou teachest art."

Ladies, let that charming *morçeau* occupy your thoughts till you summon us to coffee.

[*Exeunt* MESDAMES.]

Host hands round the Glenlivet, just that he may have an opinion about it, and the guests taste it only to oblige him with one.

Birds at the Zoo.

SPORTSMEN will be interested to know which birds are hardy, and which are not. The beautiful crossoptilon from Northern China, the pheasant who wears lovely whiskers each side of his eyes, does not mind the cold at all, coming from a naturally cold climate.

This bird is very tame, and promised some time ago to become a farmyard bird; but having bred to the third generation they generally die off. Mr. Bartlett thinks the reason of this is, in their native home they migrate and change food at different times of the year. Lady Amherst's pheasants also do well, being hardy. They come from Northern China. This bird crosses freely with the gold pheasant, producing a bird of amazing beauty; and, unlike hybrids and mules, the offspring are as fertile as their parents. By this beautiful cross, therefore, a new race of the most beautiful pheasants in the world have been produced.

There is a very beautiful and interesting bird, in excellent health. It is Stanley's jungle fowl; its home is Ceylon. These birds are worth £50 per pair. A collector, who did not know the value of them, procured seven of them alive at Trincomalee; not knowing the value, he had them cooked for dinner—rather an expensive feed, three and a half pairs of fowls at the price of £175. One would have supposed that this bird, coming from Ceylon, would require heat; but they belong to the mountains, which are cold and damp. There are only three species of white storks known in the world—the European, the Japanese, and the South American. These are all represented in the Gardens. The Japanese stork is of a white colour, while the other two have got dirty with the London smoke.

There are two kinds of birds especially worthy of notice by gentlemen who have private estates, for it is quite certain they will do well in this country. These are, first, the crown pigeon of New Guinea, a bird nearly as large as a turkey, with a beautiful crest on his head—a grand bird for the aviary, or the lawn in front of the drawing-room.

The next birds that should be acclimatized are the bronze-winged pigeons of Australia. The wings of these pigeons are more brilliant than the mother-of-pearl on a lady's fan. They require little more care than the common pigeon. The value of these birds is £4 a pair. They can probably be purchased at Mr. Charles Jamrach's, St. George's-street East.

Close to the crowned pigeons is a new kind of guinea fowl, called the vulturine guinea fowl, procured by Dr. Kirk, in the neighbourhood of Zanzibar, in June, 1874, the body being like a guinea fowl, and the neck covered with the most lovely feathers, lance-shaped, long, blue with white edges.

In the large aviary are a considerable number of guans and curassows. These birds would make excellent farmyard birds, in the form of a superior kind of turkey; but, unfortunately, they will not lay eggs. Another peculiarity is that they lose their

toes in the winter; if the frost at all touches their toes, they drop off.

A bird can be seen in this condition in the curassow's cage.

We are happy to report that the extraordinary and beautiful bird, the darter, from South America, is in good health; but he is moulting. The visitors should remark the clever way in which he transfixes a fish with his beak before he swallows it.

Sea Fishing.

AS a general rule, sea fishing is poor and unprofitable sport. The fish, indeed, are only to be found, in any number, at considerable distances from the shore; and there they swim in deep water, whence they are taken by nets by the regular fisherman. Many sorts of fish, however, may be taken with the line, especially at the mouths of rivers, when the tide is flowing landward. For this sort of angling, a strong rod, a well-leaded line, a few large hooks, and a good-sized cork float will be found amply sufficient.

When fishing at the mouths of rivers, where you may take flat-fish, eels, bass, small whittings, and the fry of cod and haddock, bait with gentles, shrimps, or red-worms very well scoured. For the larger fish, when angling from a pier, rock, or boat, bait with a small raw crab, a bit of whiting, a raw mussel, or two or three large red-worms. For mackerel, you may bait with a bit of bright scarlet cloth, and let your bait swim about midwater, or even lower, if your tackle will allow it. When using a crab or mussel bait, you should fish at the bottom. Salt water angling is by no means so pleasant, nor does it require such skill and nicety in the choice and management of baits, floats, and tackle, as angling in rivers, ponds, or streams.

The nets most commonly employed are the trawl, the sean, the ground sean, the keel drag, and the trammel. The first is a huge bag, tapering gradually to the end, and kept open at the mouth by means of an iron bar. It is dragged at the wake of the fishing smack, and is a sort of *omnium gatherum* for everything that swims near the bottom. Trawling is practised both by night and day, and most of the fish brought to market are taken either by the trawl or the seine.

The seine is the large, flat net employed in fishing for mackerel, herrings, pilchards, sprats, and other fish that swim in shoals. It is let down in the sea, and sunk by means of weights; and it requires for its proper management three boats and their crews. For mere amusement, therefore, the seine is not the proper net. The ground seine is a net of similar character, but much smaller. It may be towed by rowers in a small boat, or dragged at the side of a yacht. Wide, open stretches of sandy beach are favourable for its use. The warp at the pole end of the net is left on shore, and the boat containing the net rowed round the space to be enclosed. One man rapidly hands out the net, taking care to let the leads with which it is loaded go first, while another pulls till the enclosure is complete. The end of the net is then brought on shore, and the net and its contents cautiously landed. The keel drag

is a smaller kind of trawl, and may be dragged after a yacht or row-boat, the small end being lifted aboard occasionally, and opened, to allow the fish that may be caught to be taken out. But the best sort of net for amateur use is the trammel, as it is very easily managed. Trammels vary in length and depth, but those about fifty to sixty yards long, and from fifteen to twenty-five feet deep, will be the most handy. The trammel is commonly laid down in the evening and taken up in the morning. It hangs curtain-like in the water, and the fish, in their search for food, run their heads into the meshes, and so get entangled and fixed. Being submerged by weights nearly to the bottom, the trammel needs floats to show its position, and buoys to keep it in its place. The best kinds of trammels are double, so that the large fish are caught in the outer net, and the small ones in the inner net. All these kinds of nets may be bought or hired at the seaside, where good-natured "salts" are always to be found willing to give young fishermen practical instruction in the art of netting sea fish.

Little is known of the habits of those ordinary accompaniments of our breakfast table—shrimps, prawns, lobsters, herrings, haddocks, whiting, &c.; but more might soon be learned if, instead of consigning young fry to the ocean or the fish-kettle, we were to place them in a marine aquarium, and watch their growth and manner of life. By such a course, a visit to the seaside might be rendered profitable as well as pleasurable.

A correspondent of the *Country* gives a most entertaining account of his experience with the fly at Shoreham Harbour. He says:—The tide setting, as it does, round the east pier, made such an eddy that an angler seeing it would involuntarily say it must be full of fish, and in this eddy the bass delight to sport. Knowing my book, I went quietly along, in a somewhat excited state of mind, as splash, splash at intervals, then a series of continued splashes, soon convinced me the fish were there, and feeding. Not being able to resist having a peep over, I had the satisfaction of seeing the water swarming with fish, from 1 lb. to 5 lbs. weight, swimming a foot from the surface. Without more ado, rod goes together, line and flies on, and after a few tangles, by way of variety, all is ready. Then the game began. At the first sight of the two flies there was a general "cry havoc" amongst the bass; scores were after it, darting, dashing, and splashing. One gentleman soon had the bottom hook; the upper fly then began to bob about in the most ludicrous fashion, at times drawn a yard or so below the surface, then appearing a foot or more above it; and the desperate attempts of the fish to reach it when out of the water were quite exciting. One after another, up and down—so they continued—chasing it in its uncertain movements while drawing the fish, until I managed to keep it on the surface, when I soon had No. 2; this caused an extra commotion; their companions followed in hundreds, if out of compassion or not I cannot say, but I certainly did see some of the larger ones making violent efforts to open their mouths wide enough to bolt those in trouble. After some pulling and tugging, with an occasional united effort of the

both, they are well under the rod, but as yet twelve feet from the top of pier, and the tide swaying them up and down. Here's a difficulty, how to land them, which must be done quickly or they are amongst the wood-work of the pier. All is soon righted. I measure my length on the pier, and haul up hand over hand. Safely landed—two bright, clean, handsome fish. After continuing this performance for half an hour, my friends the bass began to be aware of my presence, and possibly my intentions, for they moved twelve or fifteen yards nearer mid-stream. I then had to adopt a fresh plan, letting the line run out with the tide to reach them, and walking quickly along the pier to keep the flies going. The fish still came, and having so much line out, the haste with which you must shorten it to keep the strain on and get them under your rod, and the great scope of water for them to play in, makes the sensation of hooking and landing a fish under such circumstances a thing to be remembered.

The fish continued feeding till high water, when away they went, and so did I. Two and a half hours of such sport is enough. I weighed my basket at Shoreham, had 24 lbs. weight of fish, from 1 lb. to 1½ lbs. each. The larger fish do not take the fly; and to compensate for not having a large one, I had two fish at a time six times following during the morning. This class of sport continued with varied success, as the following weights for days attest—6 lbs., 10 lbs., 14 lbs., 4 lbs., 24 lbs.; a sufficiently good average to tempt any genuine angler.

Undoubtedly, and there will be many who will try.

A Run in the Pacific.

BEING PART OF A JOURNAL.

WE left Honolulu with much regret, steaming out through the reefs, and spending the remainder of the day in swinging ship for corrections. On concluding operations proceeded on our way for Hilo (Hawaii), steaming on over the golden tropical sea on a course well to leeward of the islands of the group. With the setting sun a strong head wind sprang up, and we lurched and tumbled about to a great extent. This sort of weather continued for some days, when land was reported, which, as we neared and the weather moderated, looked very pretty. A long coast line of grey cliffs, many hundred feet high, stretched out as far as the eye could see, clothed with bright green vegetation, relieved here and there with masses of black volcanic rock. High up above these cliffs were dense forests of the ohia, koa ieie, mamane, mamaki, alii, and many other trees, crowded together, and sheltering an almost endless variety of ferns and shrubs. Mauna Loa and Mauna Kea, two vast volcanic mountains, whose snow-clad peaks rise to nearly 14,000 feet, were well in sight. Later in the day arrived and anchored in Hilo Bay, a pretty crescent-shaped sheet of water, fringed with cocoa palms and other tropical foliage.

Horses and guides were obtained, and parties made up to visit the celebrated active crater, Kilanea, 3,800 feet above the sea level. It was a thirty-mile journey, and occupied near two days;

for the track was over narrow roads of hard lava of the most rugged description—a sort of perpetual upward scramble amongst rocks and holes—until reaching the summit, when the glow from the great pit of fire illuminated the heavens for miles. The sight was one never to be forgotten. The whole lake seemed like gigantic waves of liquid fire, surging and boiling in commotion and confusion; and this appears to be always going on from day to day, on a more or less extensive scale.

An enterprising American a few years ago conceived the idea of establishing an hotel (the Volcano House) up here, amongst the bubbling lava and sulphurous fumes, for the accommodation of visitors; and from the record book kept there evidently it has been well patronized.

Fires were lighted, and before nightfall the coast of Hawaii had faded from our vision. The run of 2,400 miles to Tahiti (Society Islands) was of a somewhat monotonous character.

Nothing further occurred of interest until the island of Tahiti was in sight, together with the outlying one of Morea, and as we approached it, precipitous crags and crater-like depressions, of every shade of blue and grey, were seen broken into every conceivable fantastic shape, with deep, dark, mysterious gorges, showing almost black by contrast with the surrounding brightness; while below, stretching from the base of the mountain to the shore, a forest of tropical trees, with the huts and houses of the town peeping out between them. Some hours were spent outside the reef, so that it was near four before we entered the lovely harbour of Papeito, which is surrounded by coral reefs, forming a most safe and pleasant haven of rest. Of all the innumerable islands of the vast Pacific there are none which have at various periods attracted the attention of the civilized world in the same degree as the one in whose harbour we are now at anchor. At first, probably, it was from the graphic descriptions given of the island and its natives by early voyagers, the events connected with the mutiny of the *Bounty*, and still later by the occurrences of a political nature, which resulted in the French Government taking possession, and establishing a protectorate; and from that date (1843) up to the present administering the affairs of the country, levying the import and export duties, and treating it in every respect as a French colony. Papeite is the chief town of the island, the residence of the Queen (Pomare), and seat of government, all of which is of most limited dimensions, not rising much above the size or grandeur of an ordinary English village. The dwellings of the Europeans are constructed for the most part of wood, roofed with palm leaves. These extend all along the edge of the bay; while diverging from them, and running parallel and at right angles, are pretty roads, which help to make regular streets, around which and on every side rise up bread fruit, cocoa palms, and orange trees, which make up in cheerfulness for any other deficiency. The streets of an evening, the lighted shops and stores, surrounded with charming trees, and filled with the gaily-dressed natives, make up a pleasing and picturesque scene. It was Sunday evening when I first landed, and went for a

stroll through some of these beautiful avenues, following the crowds of pedestrians, gangs of sailors from the two French war ships in port, and from our own vessel. Troops of French soldiers and gendarmes, native girls and men, were strolling about in all directions.

The strange motley scene was quite indescribable. I should say all shades of beauty were here represented, from the swarthy Tahitian to the charming European, all in their gala dresses; the ladies in long, loose, cool-looking drapery, consisting of a sleeved garment, falling in ample and unconfined folds from shoulder to foot, of all hues, shades, colours, and material; their luxuriant black tresses set off by wreaths and garlands of natural flowers of charming fragrance and colour, and further ornamented with masses of snowy *reva reva* (a gauzy material like strips of tissue paper), or pretty chaplets of arrowroot plant fibre. French officers, naval and military, with pretty girls, white, brown, and half-caste, a motley crowd of officers and civilians from far and near, helped to fill up the large space.

During the stay excursions were planned to various parts of the island; amongst them, that to Point Venus was one of great interest. It was on this promontory that Captain Cook first made the astronomical observations by which he determined the geographical position of this island, and afterwards observed the transit of Venus. The road runs on for a long way parallel or nearly so with the shore, under the shade of charming avenues of cocoa, palms, and bread fruit trees, with citron and oranges, bananas and gnavas. The road lay across a number of little streams bridged over, most of which had groups of native girls either washing themselves or their garments, each ever ready with a cheerful recognition or a smile, and a hearty "Ya rana," which means all kinds of salutations and good wishes.

The scenery was splendid; wherever there was a break in the vegetation could be seen either tall, precipitous mountains close at hand, clad in refreshing green and cleft by deep, cool gorges, or the fine sweep of the ocean—a brilliant transparent blue, bound and bordered by a long white line of foaming surf dashing against the reefs, and, farther out, the deep sea, crested with white caps from the strong trade wind blowing. For some ten miles the road ran interspersed occasionally with charming little native villages, the houses cool and comfortably built of a number of bamboo or hibiscus poles, placed in the ground a few inches apart, and roofed in the usual manner—with palm leaves. At Point Venus a lighthouse has been erected, the light of which is visible some fourteen miles. The view from here is very fine. Looking seaward could be seen the barrier reefs, with the line of great white breakers curling over without cessation, and far away on the clear horizon a single lonely sail, just enough to make the solitude more complete. Close at hand is still pointed out the tamarind tree which Captain Cook planted near the spot when he had completed his observations.

Another agreeable excursion was to the hill fort of Fantana, renowned in the annals of the country, which well repays the trouble of reaching it. The road lies through guava fields, sugar plantations,

and delightfully cool and shady forests, until at length the most important waterfall in the island is in sight—a broad stream of water leaping over an almost perpendicular precipice about 650 feet high, falling into a huge basin 1,500 feet above the level of the sea, sending a continual shower of spray over it, and producing every variety of rainbow.

While here, every opportunity was made use of to get acquainted with the production, soil, climate, and inhabitants. Of the natives—those living away from the town—they are of the same indolent nature which characterizes all those met with in the South Sea Islands, having but few wants, and those easily supplied. Oranges, bananas, pine apples, and *fai-fais* grow luxuriantly in all directions. All around are picturesque and rugged hills, imparting a beauty to the scenery that cannot fail to arrest the attention—although rising in such close proximity, yet separated from each other by deep, dark gorges, showing up their precipitous and inaccessible sides, displaying themselves in a series of serrated peaks, known as the "Diadem," flanked on either side with lofty mountains 6,000 to 7,000 feet high, which probably have never yet been trod by the foot of the naturalist.

Sunstroke.

THE following extract from a work, entitled "Principles of Organic Life," by Dr. Benjamin Ridge, published in 1868, pp. 111 and 112, on this subject may be of service to the volunteers and all persons assembled at Wimbledon, as well as to H.M. army at Aldershot or elsewhere, and to the public generally:—

"'SUNSTROKE,' 'COUP DE SOLEIL,' OR 'BLOW OF THE SUN.'—The remedies of ice and cold application seem to me to be opposed to all physiology. Here the nervous sensorium has been directly attacked by over-heat, which has liquified the blood and all the inorganic fluids to the highest extent, and forced them out of the cavities of the brain. The consequence of this is plainly shown in the powerless state of the nerve matter itself. The treatment then should be—first, to place the patient in a recumbent position in a dark room, and apply hot fomentations to the head and down the spine, as well as to the extremities. It has been proved that the brain in sunstroke is emptied of its blood. Surely ice and cold do not tend to bring it back again. Whatever power the system may exert to do this, by natural laws of restoring an equilibrium and forcing blood into its accustomed channels, are abrogated; as well as those laws of the combination of the inorganic elements to give lubricating powers. The very application of ice and cold upsets all Nature's proceedings in a healthy direction. I do, therefore, say that if brains are deprived of all their nourishing blood by a sunstroke, depend on it warmth is the truest plan to restore them to integrity. But in the present treatment by ice, it is better that death followed than life saved, to be for ever after subject to the disordered state we so often see after these severe visitations. For it is totally impossible that, after the great disturbance of the material combinations of nerve elements, which we witness after sun-

stroke, and the present practice of preventing this nerve substance being restored by the use of ice, that the brain can ever be of the same healthy character as formerly. I am confident that if the plan I have sketched were adopted many more lives would be saved, as well as minds along with them."

MODE OF PROCEEDING FOR TREATMENT OF SUNSTROKE.—Prepare an ordinary tent, the inside canvas to be lined with black-glazed calico—the object being to exclude all sun rays and light; an easy recumbent chair, so that the patient can be well got at. Remove all clothing from the upper part of the body, and immediately place flannel cloths wrung out of boiling or hot water, and place them over the head, round the neck, and down the spine; the feet and legs to be also fomented, keeping this process up for several hours. In the tent, a paraffin lamp, over which a large saucepan of water should be kept boiling. A foot-bath or similar reservoir, to be handy for hot water, into which the flannels are to be dipped for use. These preparations, made at a trifling expense, are always ready for emergencies, and no time is ever lost. If the tent is near to the kitchen of any restaurant where hot water can be had in any quantity, at a moment's notice, the purpose is answered. Individuals attacked anywhere should be immediately removed indoors or under cover, and the same plans adopted.

BENJAMIN RIDGE, M.D., F.R.C.S.E., &c.

A Dog Lost.

AS if to endorse the facts that appeared in our story, "A Dog Lost," fiction has been supplemented by fact. Samuel Taylor, who has been sentenced at the Middlesex Sessions to two years' imprisonment, is perhaps able to say where all the stolen dogs go to. He left the dock in a repining spirit, complaining of the injustice of Society, and it seems likely that his mysterious knowledge will rest with him in prison.

The diplomacy of Samuel in the matter of lost dogs was of the old familiar sort. A gentleman, who lives in Marylebone, missed a valuable black poodle, and issued handbills offering a reward of three pounds for its recovery. The next scene shows us Samuel in Marylebone. He knows of a party who knows the whereabouts of "that there dog."

People like Mr. Taylor are like money-lenders in this respect, as perhaps in others. They never do anything by themselves; they "have a partner, Mr. Jorkins," if they are usurers, or "a pal wot knows," if they are receivers of stolen dogs. Mr. Taylor was so frank as to declare that the valued poodle had attached himself to one Trigout, in Leadenhall Market. The poodle had, perhaps, the indiscriminately affectionate nature of his kinsman who followed Wagner and Faust, and would not be denied.

The proprietor of the hound offered Taylor one shilling—no munificent sum—to go to Leadenhall Market, and was ready to pay five pounds when the creature was restored. At this point in the arrangement we do not think that Mr. Cook, the owner of the poodle, quite recognized the rules of honour as they obtain among persons of Taylor's occupation.

He went to Leadenhall Market with Taylor and with a detective. He could hardly suppose that the person whom the black poodle followed would fail to recognize the policeman, and to keep the black poodle even more dark than ever. This was just what happened. A mysterious boy came up out of Petticoat-lane and handed Mr. Cook a written document, assuring him that it was impossible for the poodle to appear when a policeman was in the neighbourhood.

Now, about this very time, it chanced that a coachman was asked to buy a poodle, and, searching for a poodle in Shoreditch, he met and recognized the long-lost hound of Mr. Cook. The result of these transactions was the arrest of Taylor.

He appears to resemble that well-known Liverpool fancier, whom we shall call "Sailor Tom." Sailor Tom was once asked to procure a pug, and replied that pugs were scarce, but that he had his eye on three belonging to an old lady, that "them dogs must take a hairing some day," and that he would then provide his customer with the article. People who buy dogs from dealers like Taylor and Sailor Tom ought to be aware that they are patronizing an illegitimate form of trade, which causes much pain and discomfort to household pets and their owners.

LORD MACAULAY, in his account of the state of England in 1685, observes that Enfield, hardly out of sight of the smoke of the capital, was a region of twenty-five miles in circumference, in which deer, as free as an American forest, wandered by thousands. The last wild boars, which had been preserved for the Royal diversion, and had been allowed to ravage the cultivated land with their tusks, were slaughtered by the exasperated rustics during the licence of the civil war. The last wolf that roamed our island was slain in Scotland a short time before the close of the reign of Charles II.—*Land and Water.*

Washing at Home made Pleasant and Profitable.

BRADFORD'S "VOWEL" WASHING MACHINES will wash every domestic article, from Baby Linen to Bedding, more efficiently, more conveniently, and with less wear to the clothes than by any other method, and with careful management will repay their cost in a few months.

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BY GEO. MANVILLE FENN.

CHAPTER X.—OLD MATT ON MANNERS.



toy, purchased of one of the peripatetic vendors in the street.

"I always like to support honest industry," said the old man; and when in work, and with a few shillings in his pocket, he would take a walk along the busy streets, and perhaps spend a couple of his shillings with the people whose place of business is the edge of the pavement. "Well, suppose I am a fool for doing it, what then?" said Matt, one day. "Aint ninety per cent. of the inhabitants of this precious country of ours what you call fools; and if I, in my folly, help twenty or thirty poor folks up a step in getting their bit of living, where's the harm? Don't tell me," old Matt would say to his fellow-workmen, beginning to unload the pockets which made his coat-tails stick out almost at right angles; "I don't buy the things because I want them—I do it to help them as wants it; and their name, as it says in the Testament, is 'legion.' Now, that's a jumping frog, made of wood, a bit of paint, a bit of string, and a bit of my friend Ike's wax. That's an ingenious toy, that is: who'll have it? who's got a youngster?"

Speaking in a large printing-office, amongst twenty or thirty men, there was soon a market for the jumping frog; and then the old man drew out a scrap of something soft and flabby, and held it up.

"You wouldn't tell what that is in a hurry," said Matt. "All to encourage industry, you know; that's a big india-rubber balloon, that is, only I couldn't pocket it, so I made it collapse first; so that's no good to nobody—pitch it away. Here we have—ah, this is an out-and-out top, this is, only I've broke the stick, and it wants a bit of glue—who'll have a climbing monkey?"

And so the old man would pull out perhaps twenty toys—balls, dolls, gelatine cards—to the infinite amusement of his companions, who laughed on, but without discomposing Matt in the least, who practised his humble philanthropy as long as he had money, and often, in consequence, went without a meal; for saving was an utter impossibility with the old man—a feat, he said, he had often tried to accomplish; but how, he said, could a man keep money in his pocket when he saw others

wanting? "It is done," said Matt; "but, old as I am, I can't quite see it."

But there had been no toy distributions lately, for old Matt had found times very hard; and even if they had been better, there would have been no more such amusements for the denizens of the offices he worked at, for there was another way for Matt's philanthropical purchases to go—namely, to Carey-street, to Septimus Hardon's little boy, for whose special benefit the old man had made several purchases on credit, which was freely accorded by those to whom he was known; but as to work at Septimus Hardon's printing-office, there was none for him, further than that of disposing of type and materials at one or another of the brokers', which duties he performed without recompense, grumbling sorely the while at the wretched sums he obtained for the goods.

"You ought to find fault, then, sir," he would say to Septimus. "I can't help it; but I'm ashamed, that I am, to think that people will give such a beggarly price. It grieves me, sir, to see the stuff go like that."

But Septimus did not find fault, only smiled feebly; for in this time of his sore distress he had so aged, and grown so helpless and wanting in reliance, that he trusted to the old compositor in almost everything.

"Might rob him right and left, sir," said old Matt to a favourite lamp-post in Carey-street. "He's no business up here at all. I could quarrel with him sometimes for being so simple, if it wasn't that he's such a thorough good sort at bottom. What's to become of them when the things are all gone, goodness knows; for he'll never do what I've done, sir—lived two days upon a large dose of sleep, a penn'orth of snuff, and three back numbers of the *London Journal*."

For troubles now came thickly crowding on Septimus Hardon's horizon. His wife's health failed fast, and the means were wanting to procure her the necessary comforts. But there is always light behind the darkest cloud; and now it was that Lucy, young in years, but a woman in self-reliance, proved a stay to the family. Ever busily plying her needle, ever cheerful, she was a ray of sunshine in their sad home, shedding her brightness in the darkest hours. And though Septimus Hardon querulously complained of his standing so friendless in the world, there was another who watched anxiously the failing fortunes of the family, and was always ready with counsel and aid—the Reverend Arthur Sterne, who became more constant in his visits as the affairs of Septimus grew darker. Old Matt and he, too, often met, but somehow not without feelings of distrust on either side—distrust perhaps excusable on the side of the clergyman; for the ways of Matthew Space shed no softening lustre upon his outer man.

One day old Matt went into Carey-street, to find the broker in possession; for Septimus was far behind with his heavy rent, and the landlord was alarmed at seeing his tenant's worldly possessions shrinking at so rapid a rate; while, when the old man made his way into the sitting-room, he found weary-looking Septimus waiting with aching heart

for a reply to the appealing letter he had sent to his father.

Old Matt went again, day after day, asking himself how he could be such an old idiot as to care for other people's affairs to the neglect of his own; but there was always the same weary shake of the head, and the same answer—

"No letter, Matt."

At last there was a cart at the door, and Septimus Hardon, roused up into something like energy for the time being, busily helped old Matt to remove the remnants of his furniture to the rooms the old man had secured for him in that salubrious court, Bennett's-rents.

"Taint the nicest of spots," old Mat had owned; "but then look at the convenience; and for what you are going to do, sir, you must be right on the spot; for though law's very slow work for them as goes into it, it's very quick, sharp work for them as does the copying."

That evening Septimus Hardon looked dolefully round the front room of the two the old man had secured for him; then he glanced at his wife, who tried to smile; at Lucy, busily arranging; and lastly at old Mat, who looked very cheerful and happy as he helped Lucy in her arrangements, and was now lustily polishing a table that did not require it with a duster.

"Good luck to you, sir, don't look like that. Why, you're fetching the tears into Miss Lucy's eyes, as is quite bright enough without," muttered Matt to himself. "Don't be down, sir. The wheel's always going round—bottom spokes to-day, top spokes to-morrow; and not the best place neither, for folks often knock their heads through going too high. This aint nothing, bless you; this is riches, this is. Cheerful prospect of ten foot in front; pigeons on the roof; birds a-singing upstairs; children a-rollicking in the court; orgin three times a day; writers popping in and out at the corner this side, public at the corner on t'other—brown stout threepence a pint in your own jugs; side-view almost into Carey-street, through the alley. Why, you're well off here, sir; and I've known the time when a ha'porth o' snuff and a recess in one of the bridges has been board and lodging to me; and—Servant, sir. Anything more I can do for you to-day, Mr. Hardon? If not, I'll go, sir," said the old man, suddenly becoming very distant and respectful—for a new-comer appeared upon the scene, in the shape of Mr. Sterne; when, after a very stiff bow all round, old Matt departed, stumbling more than once as he descended the worn stairs.

Matthew Space's cheerfulness was gone as soon as he left the court, and it took him some considerable time to reach his resting place—a neighbouring public-house; for he was troubled and anxious, and had to stop every now and then to think; but he could not think aloud to his old friends the lamps, on account of it being daylight; though, after an hour or two's sojourn at first one and then another of his places of resort when making his way homewards, he paused frequently and long.

"Now, I tell you what it is, sir," he exclaimed, on stopping at the corner of Carey-street once more, and slapping a favourite post on the shoulder,

"things are coming to a pretty pass. Here we are sending our thousands to prison and penal servitude for dishonesty, robbery, and petty theft; and out of those thousands no end wanted to be honest, and we would not give them the slightest chance. There are thousands wanting to get an honest living, and we won't let them. Rogue, sir!" he cried, excitedly slapping the cold iron with such energy that his hand ached, "don't tell me; you may talk of your charity and benevolence till all's blue; but I mean to say that, in the eyes of the world, sir, there isn't a greater rogue than a poor man. Beat him, kick him, turn him out, off with him—a vagabond, what business has he to be poor?"

Old Matt was out of breath, and strode on to another post.

"What business has he to be poor—a villain? What do we want with a Septimus Hardon, legal and general printer, and poor man? 'Nothing at all,' says the world; 'we'll go to the people who don't want help, who keep their carriages and country seats; and if the little men fail and become bankrupt, serve 'em right, too, what business had they to aspire? why weren't they content as shopmen or journeymen? Too many already! Pooh! then let them get out. Let them plod and crawl, or turn agricultural labourers, and earn eight or nine shillings a-week. Won't they get premiums, sir, for bringing up their families without parish help, eh? And what more can they want in this great and glorious land? Won't that do? Well, then, let 'em go to the workhouse, where there's every convenience for letting 'em die off out of the way.'"

The old man crossed the muddy street to another lamp, chuckling to himself the while, when, laying both hands upon the post, he began again—

"It's a strange thing, sir, a wonderful thing, how lonesome a man may be here in this great city of London. He may work till he drops for a living, and not get it; and he may then go and lie down and die, and all that, while nobody has known him or helped him; but when he's found, there's a fuss in the papers for a few hours, and then—on we go again. We're all wrong, sir. What's the use of our spending our hundreds of thousands, sir, in converting a few Indians, or Africans, or Australians, sir, and then holding our meetings, with the Bishop of Somewhere-or-another coming home to hold forth upon the benefits that have followed the missionary enterprise, but saying nothing about the miseries that have followed wherever the white man has set his foot? Very fine, sir, very fine, this civilization, and town and village and church springing up; but what has become of the Indian? what has become of the Australian? and what will become of the New Zealander? It's aggrandizement from beginning to end, sir—dead robbery; call it conquest if you will; but there, it's all for the extension of our glorious empire. Let's see, sir," said Matt, stopping; "I'm getting it into a knot; what was I going to say? How dare we go on so busily cleaning other people's houses, when our own is in a state that we ought as a nation to blush for? Convert savages, benighted heathen! Why, I can take you, sir, where, here in the heart of this Christian city, London, you shall

see savages ten times worse than any you shall find in Africa—more cruel, more licentious. There, hang it, sir, if it warn't for the fear of being eaten, I'd sooner trust myself amongst the blacks ten times over than the whites, hang me if I wouldn't! I know what you'll say to me, sir. 'Go and preach the Gospel to every creature.' Ah, but oughtn't we be fit to do it first? oughtn't we to look at home first? I say yes, sir, yes; and what we're doing now, sir, 's playing the Pharisee, and whitening the outside of the sepulchre; and there's no mistake about it, sir, some parts of this London of ours make a very foul sepulchre indeed."

Another fifty yards brought Matt to the next post, where he again stopped.

"I'm a leveller, am I, sir? P'raps so; but we levellers make the way smooth for those poor folks who are to tramp the road of life in days to come. I'm very sorry for the blacks, sir; and, no doubt, here and there you may find one who, under proper management, would turn out bright; but they can't be much account, or else they would have made some progress among themselves, whereas they're just where they were hundreds of years ago. It's a good job slavery is done away with; but you'll never make white men of 'em, never, sir; and they all look just as if, when their father, Ham, was cursed, he scowled like a naughty boy, and was cross and pouted his lips, and so all his children have looked thick-lipped since. But there, sir, that's neither here nor there, as you may say; though I've begun here in Carey-street and got right over into Africa; and that's the way I always do go on when I'm speaking in public. Now, look here, sir; now what am I, eh? a battered, worn-out, seedy old tramp—good for nothing. 'Whose fault is that?' you say. 'Halves!' I cry, with the world: we share the blame between us. I've been foolish: I've given way good-humouredly in the squeeze for place, and every one has pushed by me and got in front. Now, sir, what ought I to have done, eh? Why, told the world that I was a big man; caressed those who believed me, and kicked and bullied those who did not. I ought to have shoved my way through the crowd; and what would have followed, eh? Why, people would have pushed again, and grumbled; but they would have given way until I got a good standing. Now, look at that man, sir—Hardon, sir, a gentleman every inch of him, but as helpless and unbusiness-like as a baby. Why, he'll starve, sir, before he'll ask for help, if his father don't send. 'More fool he,' says the world. To be sure. What business has he with a heart, and feelings, and nerves, that make him flinch because he has got an ugly shell over his beautiful works, and so feels every slight put upon him. Why, he's just one of those men who would go in despair and make an end of himself; and then you have your inquest, and people say 'How shocking!' and never stop to think that such things keep on happening every day; and will, too, so long as the world goes round. And I'm blest, sometimes, if I believe that it does go round, sir, or else things would come right in time for everybody. But they don't, for they mend worse every day. Here we are, with one man rolling in riches he never did a stroke

to gain, and don't even know the value of; and here's Septimus Hardon with a sick wife, and with hardly common necessities. I might have introduced myself to your notice, sir, but present company is always excepted. The fact of it is, sir, that things are all wrong; and though I've been studying the matter these twenty years I can't see how to put 'em all right."

Old Matt drew a long breath, for he had been speaking loudly and with vehemence; and now, upon reaching another post, he began gesticulating fiercely, for he had warmed to his subject.

"But if I had time, sir, I'd go into the matter, sir. I'd take the poor man as he stands, and the rich man as *he* stands; and I'd—"

"Now, come; that's about enough for one night, anyhow. I don't mind a little, now and then; but they'll be hearing of you across the square d'reckly."

"I'd take him, sir," continued Matt, "and hold him up for the whole world—"

"Oh, ah! all right," said Matt's interrupter, the policeman on the beat—"I dessay you would; only the world wouldn't look at him. For why? the world's too busy. Good night, old chap."

"Good night," said Matt, cooling down suddenly, and shuffling off in a quiet, spiritless way, the fire out, and his head bent as he thrust his hands in his pockets. "Ah, he's about right; so he is. 'The world's too busy!' so it is; and I aint got a morsel of snuff left."

CHAPTER XI.—BROTHERLY LOVE.

"THERE, there, there; sit down, sit down, sit down!" croaked old Octavius Hardon, as he cowered over a miserable fire in his paper-strewn room. "Sit down, sit down, sit down," he kept on repeating, after just glancing over his shoulder as his brother, sleek, pompous, and black-clothed, entered the room—"such a gentlemanly man," as the old women of Somesham declared over cups of tea. "Sit down, Tom," croaked the withered, dry old man, pulling his black skull-cap close down to his yellow ears, and peering sideways from under his shaggy grey eyebrows at the chair he meant his brother to take.

There was a dry, mocking sneer upon his thin lips, while the grey unshorn beard wagged and twitched about as he spoke, as, without taking further notice of his visitor, he made his chair scroop on the worn carpet as he dragged it closer to the fire, and warmed his lean shins.

Doctor Hardon slowly subsided into a seat, giving a hasty glance round the cheerless room as he did so, and then finishing with a long, curious look at the lean figure before him, with its wrinkled, bony face, and attenuated form showing through the faded dressing-gown drawn tightly round him, and tucked in between his knees, while the trembling hands were stretched out over the fire.

"How are we?" said Octavius, after a long silence, broken with an effort by his brother—"how are we? Shall I put out my tongue, Tom? Would you like to feel my pulse, Tom, and sound my chest, eh, Tom? Come and try, Tom, and perhaps I shall knock you down—you humbug, you; for I'm sound as a roach yet, and shall live a score of years. Only

seventy-five, Tom; that's boyish, isn't it? Better than being sixty, and fat, and a humbug like you, aint it? 'How are we?' Ugh! drop that professional cant, or else stand up and rub your hands together softly, as you ought. What did you come for? Did you come to quarrel?"

"I came because you sent for me, sir," said Doctor Hardon with dignity, settling his chin in his voluminous white neck-cloth and using a gold toothpick as he leaned back in his easy chair.

"Sent for you—sent for you? Well, yes; so I did—so I did, Tom," chuckled Octavius; "but not to doctor me, Tom, nor to send 'the mixture as before,' nor to send 'the pill at bedtime and the draught in the morning.' No, Tom, no. How long would it take you to kill me decently, Tom, eh?—decently and respectably, eh, Tom, eh?"

"Fond of your joke as ever, Octy," said the doctor, with a sickly smile.

"Just so, Tom—just so," croaked and chuckled Octavius; "but you are no joke, Tom. I'm not fond of you. Brande's bad enough, but you're a devil, Tom."

"I've been thinking of coming over to see you several times," said the doctor, trying to change the conversation; "and I should have called when passing, only you will misconstrue my ways, Octy."

"Me? misconstrue? No, no, Tom, not I," chuckled Octavius, "I don't misconstrue. I believe you want to come, that I do. Now, what's up, Tom, eh?" said the old man, fixing his keen grey eyes upon the doctor. "You want money, Tom, don't you? But, there, you won't own to it like a man, but be indignant and offended. You've a soul above money, you have, Tom; and you wouldn't stoop to borrow money of your poor brother, Tom, even if he'd lend it to you."

The doctor moved uneasily in his chair, glancing again and again round the room, while his brother continued to watch him with his keen, unflinching eyes.

"Yes, I sent for you, Tom,—I sent for you," continued Octavius; "but not to doctor me. I should be afraid of your not thoroughly understanding my constitution, Tom, and overdosing me. But look here, Tom," chuckled the old man, leaving his seat, and coughing drily, as, bent and failing, he crossed the room to a bureau, and brought out a silver tea spoon and a bottle containing some dark liquid. "Look here, Tom," he said, reseating himself, and then pouring with trembling hand a portion of the liquid into the spoon, and in the act spilling a few drops over the side. "There," he said, smacking his lips after swallowing the fluid, and then stooping fumbling about in the fender for the stopper that had slipped through his fingers—"there, Tom, there; that's nectar, Tom; that's son, and daughter, and wife, and brother, and doctor, and friend, and everything but lawyer. That's how I doctor myself, Tom; that's how I doctor myself. 'Tain't lawyer, Tom; but I can manage that myself, and arrange about my few bits of things. You'd like my mourning ring when I'm gone, wouldn't you now, my dear brother?"

Doctor Hardon did not speak, but again shuffled in his chair, glancing at the sneering face before

him; and as he thought of the goodly lands lying fallow, and the tenement in ruins, belonging to his brother, he recalled a case where he had been one of the certifiers respecting the sanity of an elderly lady; and then he wondered whether his brother had made a will, and what it specified.

"That's how I doctor myself, Tom. That's a cure for every kind of ache, Tom; try it. It's good for runaway scoundrels of sons, and it's good for runaway daughters, Tom, and runaway nieces, Tom. It's good for everything, Tom; and I live on it," chuckled the old man. "I didn't want you for that, you see. You all left me—Septimus, and your jade of a girl, and you keep away; so I have it all to myself."

"You are not going to take any more of that now?" said the doctor, as his brother once more drew the stopper from the bottle.

"No, no; not yet, not yet, Tom," said the old man, placing the bottle on the chimney-piece. "Not yet, Tom, till after business. I wanted you about my will, Tom. D'ye hear—about my will."

Doctor Hardon could not conceal the start he gave at hearing this last sentence; but he made an effort, and began to take snuff from a massive gold box.

"Ha, ha! I thought that would interest you, Tom," chuckled the old man, watching his brother narrowly, and shading his keen eyes with his hand. "My will, Tom, my will, and what I shall do with my money; for I haven't a soul belonging to me—not a soul, Tom. So you were coming to see me, Tom, were you, eh? Then you want money, don't you? What have you been at, now? Mining shares, eh? Just like one of your fool's tricks."

"Hadn't you better refer to your solicitor?" said the doctor, with assumed nonchalance, and not noticing the latter part of the speech.

"What for—what for, eh? No, no; I can do what I want with little help; and I have had nearly all I want done; and you can do the rest. It's about money, Tom; and you always worshipped it—always—always. Now look here, Tom," he continued, going back to the bureau, and taking out a large envelope; "that's my will, Tom, and I want it witnessed; d'ye hear, Tom?—witnessed. I've had it made for years; and it only wants another signature, and then I think it will do, and it will be off my mind and be at rest; for I want to finish my reform that work, Tom—reform—reform—reform. Now, look here, Tom; but see first, there's no one listening at the door."

Doctor Hardon rose, and went across the room upon the points of his toes, peered out into the passage, closed the door silently, and then returned smiling, without having made a sound. But the smile of self-satisfaction at his successful management gave way the next moment to a look of astonishment, and then of anger, as Octavius exclaimed—

"You sleek-looking, tom-cat humbug, you! I almost wish I had not sent for you—you treacherous-looking, smooth-coated rascal!"

Doctor Hardon turned almost purple with rage, but by an effort he choked it down.

"So you are, Tom—so you are," snarled the old man, watching him keenly, and enjoying his dis-

comfiture; "but you can't afford to be affronted, Tom, can you?"

The doctor tried to laugh it off.

"You always did love to tease me, Octy," he said, with a twist of his whole body, as if the mental torture shot through every nerve.

"Tease!" snarled the old man. "Yes, call it teasing if you like. But look here," he said, drawing out the will, and folding it back so that only the bottom was visible—"bring that pen and ink, and come to the table here and sign."

And then he placed both hands tightly upon the paper, holding it down upon the table, and just leaving room for his brother to sign his name, all the while watching him suspiciously.

Doctor Hardon took the inkstand from a side table, and placed it beside the will, glancing as he did so at the paper, but only to gaze upon the blank space. He then drew out a morocco case, and set at liberty an elaborate pair of gold-rimmed spectacles, ignoring for the time being the handsome double eyeglass hanging by a black ribbon from his neck. The glasses were wiped upon a delicately-scented cambric handkerchief; there was a soft, professional cough given as they were fitted in their place; and then, taking a fresh dip of ink, the doctor again advanced majestically towards the table.

All this while Octavius Hardon had been watching his every action, with a cynical smile upon his withered face, apparently deriving great pleasure from the ostentatious performance of his brother.

"Why don't you purr, eh, Tom?" he snarled—"why don't you purr, eh?"

Doctor Hardon tried to laugh pleasantly, but it was only a fat copy of his brother's snarl; and then, once more dipping the pen, he leant over the table, placing a hand upon the paper, while at the same moment Octavius slid one of his own on one side, to give more room—perhaps to save it from touching the doctor's plump, white, be-ringed digits.

The lamp was shaded, and cast a light full down upon the paper; and as the doctor stooped to write, he suddenly started as if he had been stung, and then stood trembling and wiping the perspiration from his forehead.

"Humbug, Tom, humbug!" snarled his brother; "that's your baggage of a girl's name; but it don't upset you like that? What did you act like a brute for, and drive her away, eh? You did, Tom—you did."

"But I cannot sign the paper without knowing its contents," stammered the doctor.

"Bah, fool! tom-cat! humbug!" snarled the old man, snatching up the paper, and trying with trembling hands to force it back into the envelope. "It's my will, I tell you. There, be off!"

And he began to shuffle back again to his chair.

"I'll sign," said the doctor, reluctantly.

Octavius took not the slightest notice, only re-seated himself.

"I'll sign the paper, Octy," said the doctor, in a tone of voice that seemed to prove his brother's words—that he could not afford to offend him.

"You can do as you like," croaked Octavius, shuffling the envelope into the breast-pocket of his dressing-gown, where it stuck out tantalizingly before the

doctor, who would have given a week's income to have known its contents. "You can do as you like, Tom—as you like."

"I know that," growled the doctor, in an undertone; but the old man heard him.

"There, go!" he shouted, in a harsh, cracked voice.

"Don't I tell you I'll sign?" said the doctor, in a lachrymose, injured tone.

The old man looked at him from beneath his hand for a few moments, with a cynical grin wrinkling up his eyes, and then, slowly leaving his seat, he took out and replaced the paper upon the table, jealously holding it down with both hands; and then the doctor signed his name just beneath the fair, clear characters of his daughter's writing, while he ended with a flourish, and a ponderous "M.D."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Octavius, snatching the paper up hastily, and then holding it over the lamp, and afterwards to the fire, to dry the ink. "M.D.! Ha, ha, ha! Got your diploma framed and glazed, Tom?—you purring, sleek, tom-cat humbug, you!"

Then, without waiting to double the will in its original folds, the old man hastily replaced it in the envelope, took the shade and globe from the lamp, an old gold signet-ring and a stick of wax from the bureau; and then, with his half-palsied hand, he sealed the great envelope, and stamped the sprawling, blotchy patch of wax with the crest in the ring.

"There, Tom; that's done!" chuckled the old man, replacing the will in the bureau, turning the key, and dropping it on the carpet as he tried to place it in his pocket. "Now, look here, Tom," he said, taking the poker, and making a hole in the fire, "that envelope isn't to be opened till I'm gone, Tom; and I'll tell you this—you're one of the executors, and then you'll know what's in it, eh?—what's in it. Now, I won't tamper with it any more, and no one else shall."

As he spoke he dropped the fine old ring into the hot pit he had prepared for its reception, and sat down, chuckling at his brother.

Doctor Hardon sat down, breathing heavily, with strange thoughts in his heart, as he looked upon the weak old man before him, and thought of his possessions.

"Now, Tom," said Octavius, chuckling and placid, as he took the little bottle and spoon from the chimney-piece, "there's a decanter with some old port in that sideboard cellaret, and a glass with it. Help yourself, Tom—help yourself; this is my wine."

"But you took a quantity of that laudanum just now," said the doctor.

"You're a fool, Tom! You're a purring, sleek-coated fool!" chuckled the old man, hastily filling his spoon again, and swallowing its contents. "Help yourself—you like port, Tom—and then go, and don't come here any more till you're sent for."

Doctor Hardon drew himself up, to display his offended dignity, but the old man only watched him, and chuckled sneeringly; so he slowly rose, and with his professional roll, walked to the sideboard and back, filled his glass, and then placed the decanter upon the table. He then sat down, curiously watching his brother, who lay back in his chair, apparently gazing into the fire. The doctor raised

the glass to his lips, lowered it once more, and then his fat white hand played nervously round his mouth; for there were strange thoughts in his heart again—strange, undefined thoughts that did not take any particular shape, though there was the glint and chink of money in them all, and its uselessness to the wreck before him; while the hints he had wanted to give him respecting a loan had been passed for want of opportunity.

The doctor sighed, and seemed relieved; and then he wiped his forehead, which had turned damp; performed the same operation upon his hands, till the neat white cambric handkerchief was reduced to a miserable wisp; when, apparently further relieved, he took up his glass and drained it, but only to fill it again directly.

The port was good, certainly. The doctor played with his glass amorously, touching the rim with his lips, sipping at the bell of the ruby flower like some mammoth bee; held it before the light, and closed one eye to get a more concentrated look at the deep, rich, tawny hue of the fine old wine. Soon he sipped again—largely this time—and rinsed the generous liquor round his mouth, assuming all the airs of a connoisseur; and then he finished the second glassful, and sighed gently, for the effect was decidedly mollifying.

All this while Octavius Hardon never moved, but lay back in his chair. The doctor drew out his watch, and found it was ten; but he felt in no hurry to move, for he was accustomed to being late, and it would cause no uneasiness at home; besides, something might come of this, he thought; and as the idea crossed his mind his forehead again turned slightly moist, and he glanced uneasily at the motionless figure before him. Then he started, for there was a rustle in the passage, and a tap at the door, which was directly after opened, and the housekeeper brought in a chamber candlestick.

"Shall I wait up till you go, sir?" she said to the doctor.

"Oh, no; not for me," said he. "My brother will let me out. Good night, Mrs. Berry."

And the doctor's voice was soft and amiable.

"Good night, sir," said the woman; and then the door closed.

There was once more the rustle in the passage, the sound of a chain and bolts being shot somewhere in the back, the closing of a door, which sent a hollow echo through the deserted house; and then there was silence—a stillness that was quite oppressive; for Octavius lived with but one servant here at the Grange, a middle-aged woman, who attended to the whole of his simple wants. And now the wind sighed mournfully through the trees, a few spots of rain pattered against the window, and the doctor thought uneasily of his long walk home; but not for long, for, softly rubbing his hands, he now turned once more to the decanter.

"A good glass of wine, brother. I think I'll take another," he said, unctuously; but there was no reply.

So the doctor took another; and then, after thoroughly enjoying that glass, another; when now feeling decidedly comfortable, and that the awkward, sharp-cornered, acid crystals his brother's words

had caused to form in his nature were dissolved by the good wine, he rose, smiling, put the decanter carefully away, and began to don his overcoat, which lay across a chair.

It is possible that had the doctor been less intent upon his thoughts and the wine, he might have heard something more than the pattering of a drop or two of rain upon the window, the sighing of the wind, and the regular "tick-tick" of his own large gold watch—a something that sounded like the working of a sharp gimlet boring through the panel of a door, cautiously and softly, to render that door pervious to a sharp, bright eye; but the doctor heard no sound, and, turning towards Octavius, he said—

"Good-night, brother Octy!"

Toole's Tale.

THE favourite comedian, at the annual dinner of the Royal General Theatrical Fund, lately told a little story of the profession that is well worth reproduction:—

Three years ago, when my dear friend and old professional comrade, Henry Irving, had the heavy responsibility I have now to discharge, of proposing from this chair the toast of the evening, he told how, twenty years before, a boy had stood at the door of the London Tavern, eagerly watching the guests as they assembled for this Fund's dinner, delighted when he recognized the face of some popular actor or celebrated man. That boy was Irving himself, who has continued his early hero worship until he, too, has become famous. I, gentlemen, have to ask your forbearance and sympathy for another boy—a different kind of boy. My boy attended the first festival of the Royal General Theatrical Fund three and thirty years ago, also held at the London Tavern, when the late Mr. Charles Dickens presided, holding every one spell-bound by his graceful allusions and charming humour—except the commonplace boy I am introducing to you, who, in spite of his admiration for acting and his early reverence for Mr. Charles Dickens, was too busy cramming himself with jellies and creams behind a screen to be spell-bound. He was the son of a well-known city toast-master, who was often taken by his father to public banquets, to sit in the gallery with the ladies, or be sily fed by the waiter in some secure hiding-place within convenient distance of the sweets. That same boy has, in the way of business, eaten a good deal of pasteboard food of a less toothsome character since then, for the benefit of a great variety of theatrical funds, and is now rather bewildered at his own boldness in presuming to occupy this chair—a position which he has seen filled by so many distinguished men—and in having to appeal to you seriously on behalf of the Profession we have met to serve. It is not for a boy with this early training—a jelly-boy in fact, ahem! no connection with Dickens's Mrs. Jellyby and Borrioboola-Gha—to attempt to take you over the ground which has been so skilfully, so eloquently, and so pathetically travelled by the illustrious men who have preceded him; but this boy wishes to touch your pockets through your hearts, and induce you to give large subscriptions to a most admirable Fund—a Fund

which preserves self-respect by enabling the actor to help himself, and to make some provision against the day of disaster and misfortune.

Dropping third person metaphors, gentlemen, perhaps you found out who my boy was as soon as I mentioned him; for as I left my cab this evening, I heard a voice from a little crowd at the door say, "That's Toole!" and another voice reply, "In coorse it is, stoopid; everybody knows Toole." So as disguise is impossible, I will, in my own name, tell you of an experience of a stage supper, which the name of Mr. Charles Dickens recalls to me, and which is not without its bearing on the business before us.

I was playing Bob Cratchett in "The Christmas Carol" at the Adelphi, under Mr. Webster's management, and every night at eight, for forty nights, I had to carve a goose and a plum pudding. Mr. Webster generously provided a real goose and a real plum pudding, which were served smoking hot for Mrs. Cratchett and the seven little Cratchetts, of course including Tiny Tim. The children always had enormous portions given them, and they all ate heartily every night; but what really troubled me was the conduct of the little girl who played Tiny Tim. That child's appetite appalled me. I could not help noticing the extraordinary rapidity with which she consumed what I gave her; and she looked so wan, and thin, and so pitiful, that her face used to positively haunt me. I used to say to myself before I began, "Well, Tiny Tim shall have enough this time, at all events," and I'd pile her plate more and more each evening, until I remember she had on one occasion nearly half the bird, and potatoes, and seasoning, and apple sauce, until I hardly knew how she could carry it away to the fire-place, where she sat on a low stool, in accordance with the story, far less eat it. To my amazement she cleared her plate as quickly and was as eager as ever, pushing forward for plum-pudding with the others. I grew alarmed, and spoke to Mrs. Alfred Mellon, who was playing Mrs. Cratchett, respecting this strange phenomenon. "I don't like it," I said. "I can't conceive where a poor little delicate thing like that puts the food." Besides, although I like the children to enjoy a treat—and how they kept on enjoying it for forty nights was a mystery—I got into a condition that if I dined at a friend's house and a goose was on the table, I regarded it as a personal affront. But I said, referring to Tiny Tim, "I don't like greediness. It is additionally repulsive," I said, "in a refined-looking, delicate little thing like this. Besides, it destroys the sentiment; and when I as Bob ought to feel most pathetic, I'm always wondering where the goose and pudding are, or whether anything serious in the way of a fit will happen to Tiny Tim before the audience, in consequence of her unnatural gorging."

Mrs. Mellon laughed at me at first; but eventually we decided to watch Tiny Tim together. Well, gentlemen, we watched as well as we could, and the moment Tiny Tim was seated and began to eat we observed a curious shuffling movement at the stage fire-place, and everything I had given her, goose and potatoes, and apple sauce, disappeared behind the sham fire, the child pretending to eat as heartily as

ever from the empty plate. When the performance was over, Mrs. Mellon and myself asked the little girl what became of the food she did not eat, and, after a little hesitation, frightened lest she should get into trouble, which we assured her should not happen, she confessed that her little sisters—I should mention that they were the children of one of the scene-shifters—waited on the other side of the stage fire-place, and the whole family enjoyed a hearty supper every night out of the plentiful portions to which I, as Bob, had assisted Tiny Tim. When I told the story to Charles Dickens, he replied, "Toole, you ought to give that child the entire goose."

Hunting Sketches.

A FAVOURITE idea with those who know nothing about it is that tiger-shooting is one of the most dangerous sports ever followed by the adventure-loving Englishman. This opinion is entirely erroneous. With the help of good, well-trained elephants, this amusement will be found to be far less hazardous than the hunting of bison, or of that sagacious animal which proves of so much assistance to us in this sport, but which in its wild state is so formidable an enemy. Truly, we have often in boyish days dwelt delightedly on thrilling tales of perils encountered in this way—of tigers bounding on to the elephant's back, to render the unhappy sportsman senseless by a blow from the paw ere he had time to fire. But though, well mounted, and taking things coolly, in the howdah, tigers may be encountered with no danger to speak of, it is very different when the sport is followed, as in the Madras Presidency, alone and on foot. Then, indeed, the peril is so great that it ceases to be true sport, as it is too foolhardy and desperate a venture for those who have any regard for their personal safety. And yet many sportsmen make a habit of seeking this animal in its native jungle in this way, escaping with their lives oftener than could be expected. The habits of the tiger are so stealthy, and it conceals itself in the jungle, creeping with its slow, noiseless tread, in such a manner, that the hunter on foot is at a great disadvantage, as he may come close upon it unawares; and then woe betide him, if he be not speedy with his gun.

On an elephant one has infinitely better opportunities of observing the movements of the animal, and of taking aim, besides the greater security, the occupant of the howdah being almost out of its reach. The grand battue is by far the pleasantest method of tiger-hunting, as well as the safest; but there is another way largely adopted by the Anglo-Indians, who hold appointments in the lonely wilds of India, far away from friends and the pleasures of society. This is, to possess two elephants—one a well-trained one for mounting, the other a pad elephant, which is of the greatest use in beating up the game. In this way they go hunting alone, and, without doubt, more animals are taken in this way than in either of the others.

But one has no hesitation in saying that companionship adds immeasurably to the enjoyment of the true sportsman. The solitary tent after the hard

day's work must be very lonely; and probably he who returns to it often wishes for a friend to recount his adventures to, while receiving the sympathy so easy to accord. How pleasant the hours spent together after the battue are found by the tired sportsman, as tales of former encounters are related, moving the hearers alternately to feelings of horror and laughter. Sport in this part of the world may be enjoyed with more thorough comfort than anywhere else; and as one looks out from the tent at the orderly little camp, one remembers with a shiver the elk-hunting on the frozen snow of North America, and mentally compares the steely, never-changing sky of those times with the dark blue, star-pierced one overhead, with its varying clouds of vapour floating past. But one must not forget that those delightful days spent in tiger-hunting had their dark side, for were not two of our companions carried off by the deadly jungle fever, and will not another feel the effects of it all his life?

A party of two or three is perhaps better than a larger number; but this is of little consequence, as the enjoyment to be derived from the sport depends in a great measure on the sportsmen themselves. The choice of elephants is a very important matter, as they must be steady and to be depended upon, and care should be taken not to choose them either too large or too small. The reason is obvious. A very large one will probably be clumsy and unwieldy, and much less intelligent than a smaller animal; while the other extreme is not so safe, in case of the tiger springing up and reaching the howdah. It is seldom, however, that the spring of this beautiful, lithe creature exceeds seven or eight feet.

A thoroughly trained shooting elephant will astonish you by his intelligence, even seeming to enter into and enjoy the sport; but pad elephants are not necessarily highly trained, as their work is simple and easily taught. These latter are, however, fitted by this work for future training into shooting elephants.

The greater part of the accidents that have occurred in the prosecution of this sport have been in consequence of the inefficiency of an elephant, or have arisen from its suddenly taking fright, as one that has previously been injured by a tiger will not unfrequently become timid, and lose courage on future occasions. Therefore, on the elephant depends the safety or otherwise of it; and too much attention cannot be given to the choice of a mount.

There is another side, though, to the elephant's character. As your friend, he is all that can be desired; as your enemy, he is a most dangerous foe. To have been chased by one of these monsters is no uncommon incident in a hunter's life. Still, the relation of a narrow escape I had may not be without interest. It was in the up-country, one year that I was staying with some friends, who, being well provided, furnished me with a mount and a couple of dogs, my idea being to try and get a shot or two at the deer. Chance, however, led me out of the open, park-like country—where I had tried in vain to circumvent the deer, finding them so shy that it was impossible to get a shot—and into a

well-wooded spot, where it was hard work to get the horse I rode through the trees.

Suddenly the two dogs I had with me gave tongue; and, rushing forward, I found them baying at some great animal three parts hidden in a dense portion of the forest.

Without pausing to think, I got a little nearer, and, marking the creature's shoulder, I sent a bullet crashing in. Before I knew where I was, there was a fierce trumpeting noise, my horse wheeled round, the dogs ran yelping away, and we were in full flight, with an elephant crashing after me through the trees. Turning in my saddle, there was the angry beast, with his tail up, his pig-like eyes glowering, his ears flapping, and his trunk extended ready to pluck me from the saddle, while the horse began to tremble and sweat, as the beast got faster through the trees than we could.

Suddenly, just as I thought it was all over, the elephant gave a lurch, and fell over with a crash on to its side, tried to recover itself, struggled feebly, and lay dead; for my bullet had reached its breast.

The shikaree, a native who is well acquainted with the habits of the tiger, who obtains for you information from the villages, and who prepares a decoy, must be your next thought after choosing your elephant; and lucky is he who gets one thoroughly to be trusted. This man, after gathering intelligence as to when and where our intended victim has last been seen, sets his decoy in the most likely place. The decoy is some live animal, such as a young buffalo. If the bait has disappeared in the night, the shikaree knows where to find our game in the morning.

When a tiger has taken the bait, he seldom moves away far that day, and a good shikaree soon tracks him to his hiding-place, which will probably be in thick jungle. Then the pad elephants go to work and beat him out, which takes time, for the animal generally slinks about for a time, trying to keep out of sight. Now is the time when the sportsman discovers of what sort of stuff his elephant is made, for a good one will scent out where the tiger is, and indicate his position to his master at once. The stealthy creature tries for some time to get away without being seen, rarely charging until wounded. He becomes fierce enough, though, when brought to bay; but when it charges, so long as the elephant stands firm there is little danger, as one gets a good close shot, and it is one's own fault if one misses the opportunity of disabling, if not of mortally wounding, it. Very rarely does it mount to the howdah; and the task of defending himself is not left entirely to the sportsman, as the elephant will assist him to the best of its power. A great deal depends on your having plenty of coolness and nerve, and then, even supposing the vicious brute to almost reach the howdah, no better chance could offer itself of taking a mortal shot.

A friend was once out tiger-shooting, when having had the satisfaction of seeing his enemy fall to his rifle and stretch itself out, apparently dead, he dismounted and approached it. As he bent down to examine, it suddenly seemed to recover, and, starting half up, seized him by the leg. He had laid down his gun, and now, taken by surprise, lost his wits; and

his carelessness might have proved fatal, but for the trusty animal he had ridden, which placed its huge foot on the tiger's body and crushed out its remaining life.

The brain of a tiger is seated far back, almost into the neck, and this should never be forgotten, as a shot at that point is almost invariably fatal.

We often hear accounts of tigers twelve or even thirteen feet long; but, from my own experience, I should say that this is exaggeration, as ten feet is the greatest size I ever knew of any one killing, and this was considered a very rare specimen. This probably arises from the fact that the skins can be stretched as much as two feet, or even more. The tigress is always smaller than the male.

I have heard it said that the "man-eater" becomes mangy in consequence of his human repasts, but do not believe there is any truth in it; however, I do not doubt that the tiger having tasted human flesh once or twice acquires a liking for it above anything else. One of these tigers will keep a district of many miles in a state of constant alarm.

Before concluding, it may be as well to say a few words on the subject of guns. The great object is, of course, to produce an instantaneously fatal result, or else the animal may creep away and die by itself, while you lose the skin you had set your mind upon. For this sport, therefore, large bores and explosive shells are the best things possible. Shells, it is true, vary a good deal, and are not quite to be depended on as to their bursting. A shell loaded with picrate of potass, fired from a No. 8 bore, will partially if not completely paralyze the tiger, whatever part of the body it strikes. When using plain bullets, you use the largest charge you can, but this is unnecessary with shells. The shoulder shot is generally sufficient with the shell, according to my experience. Many sportsmen make constant use of Express rifles, and no doubt many tigers are killed with them. It is a strange fact, that in spite of the great numbers of tigers frequently being shot, the number of them in India seems scarcely to be lowered at all.

An Indian Juggler.

MR. E. STANLEY ROBERTSON, late of the Bengal Civil Service, contributes to the capitally conducted *University Magazine* (Hurst and Blackett) an interesting article on the above subject. He says:—

"Early in January, 1877, I was stationed at Moradabad, in Rohilkund. My wife was in England, invalided; so, instead of living alone, I had adopted a common and convenient Indian fashion, and was 'chumming' with a friend. My chum was Mr. Carmichael-Smyth, acting superintendent of police for the district. One day Mr. Smyth told me that he expected to receive a visit from a native, an amateur conjuror, who would perform some amusing tricks. It so happened that on the same day we were waited on by a Parsee pedlar, who wanted to sell us ivory and sandal-wood carvings, and such like knick-knacks, which are the usual stock-in-trade of the Parsee travelling merchants. While we were chaffering with this man the conjuror was announced,

and was shown into the common sitting-room. He was followed by a crowd of our servants; for the native of every rank loves a conjuror, and gazes on a conjuring performance with the simple admiration of a child.

"There was nothing very remarkable in the appearance or dress of our conjuror. An elderly man, short and sparely made, dressed in dingy white cotton, with very tight sleeves to his robes and very tight legs to his drawers. He might have been a respectable servant out of place, but actually was a small landowner, who had taken to conjuring for his amusement.

"When he entered the room, he spread a white cloth upon the floor and sat down upon it, with his back to the wall, the door of the room being on his right hand. His spectators were disposed in the following fashion:—Mr. Smyth sat on a chair nearly in the middle of the room, I was sitting on a sofa near the door, the Parsee merchant stood in the doorway, about arm's length from me. The servants stood about in groups, the largest group being between the door and the conjuror. As soon as he had settled himself he turned to the Parsee, and asked for the loan of a rupee. The pedlar at first demurred a little, but, on being guaranteed against loss, he produced the coin. He was going to put it into the conjuror's hand, but the latter refused, and told the Parsee to hand it to Mr. Smyth's bearer. The bearer took it, and, at the request of the conjuror, looked at it, and declared it to be really a rupee. The conjuror then told him to hand it to his master. Mr. Smyth took it, and then followed this dialogue:—

"Conjuror: 'Are you sure that is a rupee?'

"Smyth: 'Yes.'

"Conjuror: 'Close your hand on it, and hold it tight. Now think of some country in Europe, but do not tell me your thought.'

"Then the conjuror ran over the names of several countries, such as France, Germany, Russia, Turkey, and America—for the native of India is under the impression that America is in Europe. After a moment's pause, Mr. Smyth said he had thought of a country.

"Then open your hand,' said the juggler; 'see what you have got, and tell me if it is a coin of the country you thought of.'

"It was a five-franc piece, and Mr. Smyth had thought of France. He was going to hand the coin to the conjuror, but the latter said—

"No, pass it to the other sahib.'

"Mr. Smyth accordingly put the five-franc piece into my hand; I looked closely at it, then shut my hand and thought of Russia. When I opened it I found, not a Russian but a Turkish silver piece about the size of the five-franc, or of our own crown piece.

"This I handed to Mr. Smyth, and suggested that he should name America, which he did, and found a Mexican dollar in his hand. The coin, whatever it was, had never been in the conjuror's hand from the time the rupee was borrowed from the Parsee merchant. Mr. Smyth and his bearer had both of them closely examined the rupee, and Mr. Smyth and I turned over several times the five-

franc piece, the Turkish coin, and the dollar; so the trick did not depend on a reversible coin. Indeed it could not, for the coin underwent three changes, as has been seen."

Cleopatra's Needle.

THIS ancient relic is now in a fine position for the inspection of the hieroglyphics. The side which is in the most perfect state of preservation is to be placed to face the roadway of the Embankment, and is at present the one which can be best seen by the visitors. To those who take an interest in this old monument, its present position, which is parallel to the ground and on a level with the eye, gives advantages for inspecting it which will be lost when it is finally elevated on its pedestal. One point of interest is the comparison of the hieroglyphics of the first inscription of Thothmes III. with the later addition of Rameses II.

It will be remembered that Thothmes III. erected this and its companion obelisk at Heliopolis—the inscription, in fact, states that "He erected two very great obelisks, capped with gold, when he celebrated the panegyry of his father who loves him"—and that he placed one column of the hieroglyphics on each of the four sides. Rameses II., who dates about a century and a half later, finding space on each side of these inscriptions, added two lines of hieroglyphics, thus completely covering up the whole surface of the obelisk with these ancient characters declaratory of his greatness and glory.

At the upper part of the obelisk, close to the pyramidion, the granite seems to have suffered no damage from time or weather, and at that part the characters are as sharp as at the period they were originally cut; and it will be seen that either the workmen had retrograded in their art in the interval between the two Pharaohs, or that the second inscription had been executed under circumstances which did not allow of such good work being done. As the monument would then be erect in its place, a scaffold would no doubt be made for this purpose. A comparison now on the spot will satisfy the eye of any one on this matter.

The first figures under the pyramidion are three hawks, with the crown of Upper Egypt. The centre hawk belongs to the Thothmes III. inscription; those on each side are part of those of Rameses II. Here the coarse, deeper cutting of the last is particularly evident. The centre hawk is not only better drawn, but the finish in every part of its detail is much more perfect. Close underneath is the cartouche of Thothmes. It consists of the oval, or cartouche, containing the solar disc, the hieroglyph for M., and the scarabæus or Sacred Beetle. On each side of this is the cartouche containing the name of Rameses.

Here again the coarseness of the work of the later characters is equally conspicuous. In the beetle and the solar disc of the older one the high finish of the hollowed-out surface is a striking point, whereas in the other they are sunk deeply into the stone and left rough, and, in comparison to the others, seemingly unfinished. This depth would give greater shadow, particularly under an Egyptian sun, and

the deep cutting may have been "inspired" by the Government officials, in order to make the name of Rameses more telling and conspicuous than the other.

It will also be noticed that the space on each side did not allow of the cartouches being made as wide as the centre one. This is more patent at the top than farther down, where the obelisk enlarges towards that end. From the damage which the monument has sustained, particularly at the lower end, about three inches is being cut off its length, so as to increase the surface of its base.

The object of this is, of course, to give greater security to it when it is erected. This operation cannot be looked upon but with regret by all lovers of the antique. Surely some means could have been found to make the obelisk secure enough without losing a scrap of the old granite! There is a small model, which visitors may see, of the means by which Mr. Dixon proposes to raise the Needle, and finally place it safely on its pedestal.

In the New Forest.

IF you are a poet, or a painter, or a philosopher, or a sinner, or a Shaker, or a bee, or a butterfly, or a bird, or a viper, you cannot hope to dwell anywhere more comfortably than in the New Forest. There you will be quite at home. But if you are not to be classed under any one of these categories, I am by no means sure that you will find yourself in desirable quarters. The New Forest has its drawbacks, and you may feel discontented at Beaulieu, Brockenhurst, or Burley, even as Rasselas was ill at ease in the Happy Valley.

Thus much I dare to conjecture in your regard, but it may be that I am no competent authority. My wrongs may have perverted my judgment, for even as I write I am smarting under the sense of accumulated personal grievances. I have not yet got over the coldness, not to say the heartlessness, of my reception at Lyndhurst-road. No flourish of trumpets, no beating of drums, no ringing of bells, no waving of banners, signalized the pride of the people of Hampshire on finding me in their midst. The only voice of welcome that greeted me on my arrival issued from the lungs of a donkey browsing in a field hard by, who—bless his congenial heart!—hailed me with a fraternal bray as I walked out of the station.

Alone and in profound silence had I to ascend that awful break-neck omnibus, the very thought whereof makes my bones ache in their sockets.

I need not rive your bosom, dear reader, nor cause your tears to flow anew, by repeating the sad story of the inhospitable treatment that awaited me at Lyndhurst. Then, again, when I looked at the inhabitants of the place, and observed their style of dress and what manner of men they were, a feeling of disappointment swept over my soul, nipping my hopes and blighting my aspirations, even as the withering winds of the desert ruin vegetation and spread desolation all around. (Permit me to remark, *en passant*, that I am indebted to my Lord Russell for this noble image.)

Remembering to have seen the Foresters at the

Crystal Palace, gorgeously arrayed in coats of Lincoln green, jack-boots, leathern belts, plumed hats, "and all that," as Burns says, I had hoped to find the denizens of the New Forest clad in like picturesque apparel. Moreover, I had figured them to myself as splendid fellows, of colossal frames, standing at the very lowest six feet two in their stockings. Judge, then, of my chagrin on finding them a frail, delicate-looking race, of hardly average stature, and wearing clothes which differ in no essential respect from those worn by the generality of English people, whether dwelling in town or country! Asked I of myself, "What doth it avail a man to be a Forester, if he may not dress as such, and go about even as I saw a Verderer at the Surrey Theatre once upon a time, with a sword by his side, a hawk upon his wrist, and an axe in his girdle?" I had at first serious intentions of going down to the Forest in that guise, and was only deterred from so doing by the observation of my landlady that the day of my departure from London was *not* the "Fifth of November!"

But the sorest grievance of all remains to be told. I object to be followed about by a cow. Not that I dislike cows as a race. By no means. On the contrary, I rather like them. Their odour is, to my thinking, peculiarly fragrant; and their lowing, if not very musical, is at all events much more so than the singing of some people I wot of, the braying of a brass band, or the grinding of a barrel organ—sounds which, as the B. P. will doubtless have observed ere now, have often well-nigh bereft me of reason.

Be it understood, then, once for all, that I have no antipathy to cows. Nor would I be thought so churlish as to resent the fond familiarities of any pet creature, from a woman to a canary. There is no man whom I envy so much as my friend Mulfeather, blessed as he is in the possession of an oyster which, as he solemnly assures me, follows him about like a child.

Some people might find it hard to swallow that oyster; but I don't, for Mulfeather is a Plymouth Brother, and—whatever he might do in his own interests—would not tell a lie (nor do anything else) to save a fellow-creature from drowning. But I protest against being persecuted by the attentions of any living thing whatsoever, and most of all by those of a cow—a respectable animal, doubtless, but somewhat "*lourde*" and ungraceful, and therefore all the more likely to attract censorious notice, both towards herself and her companion. Yet, go where I may, such would seem to be my unlucky destiny.

It was but the other day, at Harrogate, that a cow dodged me up and down Montpelier Parade and round about the "Stray" for the best part of two hours. And as I was sauntering pensively over Emery Downs in this forest of perennial novelty, no longer ago than last Wednesday, whom should I meet but another cow—and a "dun" cow of all cows in the world, as if I had not "duns" enough already to pester me—and such a fancy did the creature take to me, that, instantly changing her course, she turned back, and walked meekly in my track all the way from Emery to Mark Ash, and thence to my

lodgings at Lyndhurst! Now, this I call persecution.

In vain did I alternately threaten and expostulate, in vain did I resort to soft words and hard stones. She clung to me like Poverty, and would not be cast off.

The only reason that I can conjecture to account for my being thus systematically importuned by cows is that I have never been vaccinated. They want to torture me into vaccination, but they have mistaken their man. I would rather be torn asunder by wild horses, or nibbled to death by ducks, than vaccinated on compulsion. So the cows may as well give it up as a bad job.

Such are the grievances to which I have been exposed ever since my arrival in the New Forest; and when I add that neither for love nor money can I get a glass of beer worth drinking, and that a gipsy woman told me last evening that I am fated to marry a large widow, who will insist upon taking me out to the West Indies next year, it will surely be admitted that my personal experiences may well disenchant me with the locality.

On the other hand, to anybody not doomed to run the gauntlet of such tribulations as have awaited me, the New Forest must be indeed a delightful place. George III., to be sure, pooh-poohed it, declaring it to be "worse than any part of Bagshot Heath," and incomparably inferior to Windsor Forest. To which his host, Sir Harry Neale, of Walhampton, ventured to reply that "it was fortunate in this, as in other matters of taste, that all did not think alike." But His Majesty made answer that, for his part, "he had no taste for what was called the fine, wild beauties of nature; he did not like mountains and other romantic scenes, of which he sometimes heard much." This confession was worthy of the royal speaker, the rather that there is nothing resembling a mountain in the forest, and that as for mountains generally, for which he professed such an aversion, it is a fact, capable of historic demonstration, that the dear old noodle never laid eyes on one in his life.

A sympathetic survey of the Forest, in its varied beauties of leafy glen, verdant grove, sunny glade, and all the multifarious phases of brilliant and affluent vegetation, provokes a contrast between William the Conqueror and Buggins the builder, anything rather than favourable to the latter gentleman. William undoubtedly carried things with a high hand; but then he was the champion of Nature, and for the assertion of her rights and the vindication of her supremacy undertook the most arduous achievements, which he executed with ruthless determination. Revolutions are not made with rose-water, no more are forests. William razed castles and churches to the earth, and laid towns and villages prostrate in the dust, and his carrotty son Rufus did the same, in order that, eight hundred years afterwards, in the year of grace 1878, Englishmen and Englishwomen might be free to roam through sylvan solitudes, and amid moors, heaths, and woodlands, far from swarming towns and clamorous cities.

Buggins, on the contrary, would not leave us a green leaf or a blade of grass. He prefers a chimney-pot to the loveliest flower that ever bloomed, and a

lamp-post to the finest tree that ever dallied with the breeze. Buggins would abolish gardens, groves, and warbling dales, to substitute streets, squares, roads, and alleys. William loved meadow and mountain, moss and moor, autumnal shrubberies and vernal woods. Buggins goes in for lath and plaster band-boxes, which he calls "villas," and which shake when a cat sneezes. "Buggins, you are an impostor! William, you are a gentleman!"

So saying, I laid me down recumbent upon the greensward, beneath the shade of a venerable oak which flourished luxuriantly hundreds of years before I was born, and will doubtless continue so to flourish hundreds of years after I shall be dust. I fell into a romantic reverie, and gave free reins to my vagabond fancy, who, as is her wont, led me a pretty dance. I closed my eyes in blissful meditation, envying the lot of those unsophisticated rustics whose happy fate it is to dwell under the greenwood tree, far from the madding crowd and the busy haunts of men. "Perish Piccadilly! A fig for Charing Cross! Down with Buggins! Up with the Conqueror!" were the last words that escaped my lips ere I sank into a delightful slumber.

There is no knowing how long I might have slept, dreaming placidly of Robin Hood and his merry men, and instituting invidious comparisons between the vitreous arcades of the Burlington and the leafy arcades of "No Man's Walk," had I not been suddenly awakened by the sensation of something cold and clammy upon my cheek. It was a frog! At the same moment I felt a strange twitching in my moustache, as of a creature struggling to get free. It was a "daddy-long-legs, who would not say his prayers." I gazed wildly around me, and what, think you, did I see? Horror of horrors! an adder within five inches of my nose! Meanwhile, my cow had strayed into Anderwood Inclosure, and was lowing wailingly.

"Ah, well," quoth I, as I sprang to my feet with the agility of Lulu, "it is not all paradise even in the Forest. Piccadilly has its privileges, and there is something to be said for Charing-cross, after all."

Next day we went to Minstead. By "we" I mean my cow and I. I picked her up—or, to speak more properly, she picked me up—upon the Brockenhurst Road, right opposite the Crown and Stirrup Inn. Hoping to get round her with kind words, and so induce her to quit me, I addressed her in the words of that most melodious of all poets, my friend Richard Belward—

"Oh! my heart is a forest calm and deep,
Where the sunbeams play and the shadows sleep,
And it echoes with melodies sweet and rare,
And *thou* art the nightingale warbling there."

That is what I said to my cow, adding a polite request that she would go to the devil and leave me alone; but she would not. She evidently did not care to be called a nightingale; and, to prove that she was not one, began to low furiously. The case was hopeless. So on we trudged together, I and this Ruth of a cow, all the way to Minstead Manor, to see the stone that marks the spot where our King, hers and mine, was surreptitiously murdered.

The beauty of it is that it is no stone at all, but

an iron column of cubicular form, bearing this inscription:—"Here stood the oak-tree on which an arrow, shot by Sir Walter Tyrrell, glanced and struck King William II., surnamed Rufus, on the breast, of which he instantly died, on the 2nd day of Aug., 1100. King William II., surnamed Rufus, being slain as before related, was laid in a cart belonging to Purkess, and drawn from hence to Winchester, and buried in the cathedral church of that city. That where an event so memorable had happened should not be hereafter unknown, this stone is set up by John, Lord Delaware, who had seen the tree growing in this place."

So runs the story as told by Rufus's "Stone," with what amount of truth let historians decide. It says something for the interest attaching, from generation to generation, to matters monarchical in this inviolate island of ours, that the name of the man upon whose cart the dead body of a king was carried to its resting-place should have survived for so many centuries. It will doubtless survive till the last syllable of recorded time. He was "one Purkess;" and a lineal descendant of his is supposed to be still living in the Forest.

On my way home, I wandered many miles out of my due course, but had the good luck to give the cow the slip. I fell in with the parson of the parish, a most estimable gentleman, a splendid preacher, and, withal, the handsomest man for miles around. He asked me a riddle—"Why is a man who lives in the New Forest like a man who has been taken ill in Pall Mall?" "Because he is *sick west'ard* (sequestered)." Lovely! I asked the reverend gentleman whether the riddle was original. He assured me that it was. *There* is a parson after my own heart. That he may live for a hundred years, and die bishop of the diocese, is all the harm I wish him.

Shot by a Deer.

THERE are curious stories by dozens in the record of "flood and field." Every book of hunting and shooting contains some wonderful tale, and every old shot can spin yarn after yarn of "wild adventures that befall." Some that are not believed are none the less true, for travellers and hunters do "strange things," as well as "see" them, and are often shy of narrating all they know, because truth is so often less probable than fiction.

Who would credit, for example, that a wild Australian bull, in full charge, had been felled to the ground and slain by a pebble thrown from the hand. Yet that is on record. And in the long list of the accidents that have befallen the disciples of Saint Hubert we find the oddest of tales. It is Harris, we believe, who narrates, in his "Highlands of Ethiopia," that a dying antelope pushed into the pursuer the hunting-knife which was drawn to slay it, well nigh "gralloching" the man instead of suffering that process itself.

Something of the same character, but more extraordinary still, is an unfortunate accident which has occurred in Mar Forest. It is not very uncommon for deer to kill their hunters. The brow antlers of a "stag of ten" are like bayonets, and the old song



"A TRIBAL FIGHT."

says, "If thou be hurt with horn of hart, it brings thee to thy grave."

But who ever heard of a stag shooting the man who shot it? Nobody would dare to invent such an incident in a volume of sport. The mighty hunter who got the *sobriquet* of "Gordon Cumming it too strong" never told us such a story as that. Yet the thing really happened in the Grampians, and a right good forester, now buried among the mountains, was shot through the heart by a bullet fired by a stag of which he made sure, and which was itself at the point of death.

The unlucky sportsman was named George Urquhart, and was a first-rate and successful deer-stalker, one of the best of Mr. Powell's foresters of Braemar. When out with his master and some others on the face of Carintoul, a fine stag was stalked and surrounded by the party. Urquhart was sent to keep the animal from escaping by the head of the glen, and, firing at it, he wounded it again. Another forester then joined him, and the two followed it out of the pass into a very deep glen, with broken ground and precipitous sides, and a foaming burn below. The deer was so badly hurt that the man came up with Urquhart, and tried to drive the deer down with the butt-end of the rifle before dealing the finishing blow.

In despair and pain, the stag lashed out, and, striking the hammers of the piece, knocked one off and brought the other down on the cap, so that the charge exploded and drove the bullet straight through the forester's body.

He stood for a moment, and then said quietly, "I am shot," and fell into the arms of his companion, Grant, who laid him down, and tried to stop the bleeding. Seeing the poor fellow was so much hurt, Grant hastened up the glen, and found his master, with the others, wondering what had become of the two men.

On hearing the melancholy news, Mr. Powell and his friends immediately went down to Urquhart, while his comrade ran over the hills to a shieling, seven or eight miles off, for further assistance, and thence to Braemar, sixteen miles farther, for doctors.

But the forester was as fatally hit as the stag, which had dropped dead a little way below; and although he could tell how the accident happened when his master first came up, by-and-by he grew weaker and weaker, and died as twilight began to fall.

At about seven o'clock the man came back; and, placing the body on a hill pony, they carried it out of the pass. But by this time the darkness was so dense that, in the wildness and desolation, the mournful party utterly lost their way. At midnight they were obliged to lay the corpse on the heather, and sit down to wait for morning. But just on stopping they saw the fire in the shieling to which Urquhart had first gone, and then the lanterns of the men sent out to look for them.

So at last they got shelter. The doctors had also come; but the deerstalker was long past their help, dead and cold, like his slayer, the antlered king of the hills, which lay in the wild mountain burn.

The stag had positively shot the forester with his own rifle in its dying agony, avenging the death of many a "hart of grease," and its own fate besides.

A Tribal Fight.

IT was my fortune once to witness a fight between two rival tribes of the east coast of Africa, and in the brief interval that it lasted I had full opportunity of seeing how it is that the people of Africa do not increase and multiply to any great extent.

We were on our way home from India, when, in place of encountering the softly blowing monsoon, we were caught by one of the terrible cyclones that at times rage in these latitudes. In spite of all that skilful seamanship could do, we were driven rapidly southward; and at last, after three days' buffeting with the waves, were cast ashore, to struggle to land half dead, with nothing more than the clothes in which we stood.

As we stood huddled together, thinking of how we should next proceed, we saw approaching us, evidently in a state of great excitement, a party of about fifty or sixty blackish, yellow-looking savages, armed with guns and spears, and from their aspects it was evident that they looked upon us as their lawful prey. Being entirely unarmed, it seemed utter folly to attempt resistance; and we were resigning ourselves to our fate, when a loud yell from the farther side of a little creek made our friends stop short and respond with a second yell.

"More savages to share it amongst them," I thought; when, to my great surprise, I saw the first party run back to meet the second, and it was soon evident that they were rivals, for a fierce fight took place on the banks of the little river, the latter party trying to cross it, and the former driving them back with spears and arrows, and clubbed guns; for they seemed to have no ammunition. Arrows were used with deadly effect, javelins flung, spear thrusts delivered, of the most deadly nature; and, after a furious onslaught, the late arrivals were driven back; but not until quite a dozen of the victorious party were lying dead and dying on the sands.

It was a most striking incident, and exciting to a degree, while it proved our salvation; for, while the fight was going on, a boat put in from a passing ship, a second followed, and, amidst the disappointed yells of the savages, we were extricated from the deadly peril in which we stood.

The Fish Bill.

A SELECT Committee, with Sir Matthew White Ridley as chairman, have considered the whole question, and the conclusions to which they came are of great importance. The principal enactments are as follows:—

There is to be a close time for fresh-water fish between the 15th of March and 15th of June, both inclusive. If any person during this close season fishes for, catches, or attempts to catch or kill, any fresh-water fish in any river, lake, tributary, stream, or other water connected or communicating with such river, he shall, on summary conviction before two justices, be liable to a fine not exceeding forty shillings. The term "fresh-water fish" includes all kinds of fish (other than pollan, trout, and char) which live in fresh water, except those kinds which migrate to or from the open sea.

The above sections, however, are not to apply to any person taking fresh-water fish for scientific purposes. This, therefore, will allow the authorities of the Zoological Gardens, the Westminster, Brighton, and other aquaria, to obtain a supply of fresh-water fish as food for their animals and birds. The use of fresh-water fish for bait is also permitted. Owners of several fisheries where trout, char, or grayling are specially preserved are allowed to destroy fresh-water fish, but not grayling.

By the Bill as it now stands it will be illegal to angle with the rod and line in the close time; but this provision will not apply to "any person angling in any several fishery with the leave of the owner of such fishery, or in any public fishery under the jurisdiction of a board of conservators with leave of the said board." Where a board of conservators is appointed under the Salmon Fisheries Acts, the regulation of the fresh-water fish, close time, &c., will be placed under them.

The Dynamite Act, which prohibits the use of dynamite or other explosive substance, shall apply to the catching or destruction of fish in any water, either public or private. Sundry clauses which by the Salmon Act render certain modes of fishing illegal are introduced into this Bill, as well as regulations relative to licences, water bailiffs, the close time for trout and char, &c. The counties of Norfolk and Suffolk, which are already protected by a Fresh-water Fishery Bill, are exempted from certain clauses of the Act. In these two counties angling with rod and line is permitted during the close time.

Weever Fish.

AT this time of year, when the sea-bathing season is about to commence, we think it advisable to warn our readers against a danger which not unfrequently affects bathers on the sandy coasts. Sandy coasts are the favourite habitat of the weever fish, also called the sting fish, the sea viper, &c. Of these there are two kinds—the larger, *trachinus draco*, the smaller, *trachinus vipera*. The little one is generally from four to five inches long, and of a sand colour.

These weevers are armed with weapons which, although doubtless serviceable to them in their own domestic economy, are capable of inflicting severe wounds on the human system. Immediately below the head the weever carries a fin of triangular shape: this fin is capable of being elevated or depressed, like the sail of a barge. Set firmly into the gill-cover is also a sharp, dagger-like spine, the point of which is lancet or spear shaped, and very sharp. The weever is in the habit of burying himself in the sand. At the approach of danger he hoists the sail-like fin on his back, the spine projecting well upwards; he is said, moreover, to be able to direct a blow sideways or backwards with the lancet on the side of his gill covers.

The wounds on the human system made by the weever fish cause very great pain to the person who has the misfortune to be stung by it; nor is the pain momentary, for the effects of the sting have been known to last several months. The weevers are

well known to shrimpers, and in dark nights the shrimpers are afraid of picking their shrimps, on account of the weevers which may be among them.

Visitors at the seaside should, therefore, always consult the local shrimp-net men about the localities infested with weevers. Weevers are, however, very good to eat; and there is a law, we believe, in France that no weever shall be brought to market unless his fin has been nipped off with a pair of scissors. Luckily, the weevers do not attack; they use their sting simply in defence.

It is not impossible that any person, lady, gentleman, or child, when bathing on sandy shores, may have the misfortune to put the foot upon a weever. If so, the weever will certainly sting. We therefore warn our readers who are about to bathe on the sandy coasts never to venture into the water without bathing slippers, as the weever's sting is fortunately not sufficiently strong to pierce the leather. On sandy coasts children should not be allowed to paddle about with naked feet. Some kind of protection to the sole of the foot should always be worn.

Coloured Glass at Paris.

IT is worth while during these Exhibition days to draw attention to the great success of our manufacturers in taking up the peculiar industry revived by the Murano and Venice works. The Messrs. James Powell and Sons, of Whitechapel, have furnished the Prince of Wales's pavilion with a top-light, throwing a mellow tinge on the dining-table beneath, and with the two coloured glass windows in the vestibule. One of these gives the Four Seasons, who surround a figure symbolical of Mother Earth. Winter would dress her in furs, spring would deck her out in flowers, summer would pour juicy fruits into her lap, and autumn would crown her with bunches of grapes and ears of yellow corn. The conceit is pretty, the composition pleasing, and the tone rich and harmonious. Our common parent is a modernized Ceres. The other window shows forth the signs of the Zodiac. On the Prince's table there is a dinner set, also manufactured at the works of Messrs. Powell. It is in muslin crystal. A delicate blue thread winds thrice round the bottom of the bowl, as a snake bracelet coils round a lady's arm. The thread, as it should be, is sparingly applied. Hodgetts and Richardson, of whom more anon, have a patent for threading glass by machinery. What is done by this process has the fault of excessive regularity. The coils are not altogether so close, but are just as even as the windings of a cord round a boy's top. This sort of threaded glass is cheap, and that done with the hand is not dear. It was the cut stems of the tumblers and wine-glasses, which were each made in four separate pieces and then joined, which brought the Prince of Wales's dinner set up to seventy shillings a dozen.

It may be of interest to know how the azure thread was coiled round the bottom of the bowl. While the crystal muslin glass was being rolled round on the end of the blow-pipe, a man came with a bit of blue "metal," which he held to the bottom of the bowl until the blower removed it with his rod. Infinite is the variety of the opal glass, of which two

pieces exactly alike are never obtained from the same pot of "metal." In the trade, "metal" is the technical name for glass in a state of fusion. When the lump of metallized or opaline glass is getting cold, after being rolled out at the end of the blow-pipe, to be worked up, it is held again over a crucible, to keep it in a state of "metallic" softness. The part first exposed to this operation takes the milky opacity in the greatest degree. A tazza in this material has in certain lights the exact tint of a dark blue and white convolvulus, and in others an iridescent milkiness. In certain atmospheric conditions the sea presents the pale green, purple, and azure hues, coming and going, and blending into one another, which we find in a beautiful oviform jug, worthy to serve at the toilette of the wave-born Aphrodite. This vessel is unmatched by any in the Murano and Venice show. Originally bell-shaped, the neck was at the rim pinched in the blowing into a cruciform figure. A Venetian mirror, framed with plaques of white enamel on a blue ground, and decorated with a Raphael pattern, reflects the opaline ewer, which on the side of the spectator has shifting marine tints that, the light being different, it is far from presenting on the side next the looking-glass. The designs on the enamelled border of the mirror were painted on cold glass, which was then put into an oven, and kept there for two or three days, until the colours were burned in. Very special products are of pale green bottle glass, made into table vessels and ornaments. Cheapness is one of their merits. Some of the pieces are shaped according to old Roman vessels in the South Kensington and British Museums. Another class of exhibits deserving inspection are the fancy toilette bottles and cabinet vases in black, blue, green, or red glass, which have the appearance of gold dust sealing-wax. This ware might render good service in brightening up English abodes. Gas, fog, and smoke are terrible foes of gilding, but would be powerless to hurt it in this combination. Its manufacturer ought to see in what way he could treat it for the architect. The process followed in making it is simple. When the "metal" is taken out of the furnace, it is rolled over gold leaf until it licks it up. Then the lump is held above the fire, and kept there until it is in a state of fusion, when it is blown out. Jewellers might employ with advantage for fancy ornaments glass prepared in this manner.

There is nothing new under the sun, not even that novel thing enamelled glass, which, if it were not so expensive, would be a formidable rival of the Wedgwood jasper ware. It was known to the Romans and the Venetians, who called it cameo-glass; was revived by the Murano and Venice Company, and from their works travelled to Stourbridge and Whitechapel. In making it, a lump of coloured glass is first gathered in the blow-pipe, and then dipped into the white opaque "metal." Two strata are thus formed. When the blower gives the proper form, the sculptor cuts with a chisel into the upper coat, taking all the white away, except what is to be left for the relief of the design. Of necessity, this work is very expensive. Mr. Northwood has been two years at the Dennis Vase, in the Webb

stand, and has two years' more work to do on the unfinished side, which is only roughly tooled. This will explain why so high a price as £2,000 will be asked, for it is not yet sold. The subjects are, "The Triumph of Galatea," on the obverse side, and "Aurora heralding Apollo," on the reverse. Sea horses, tritons, dolphins, and rippling waves are executed with boldness, and tooled with surprising delicacy. No marble is superior in texture to the enamel in which the figures are cut out. Sea horses' heads serve as handles, and a Pegasus rears itself on the top of the lid.

Lecheval, who works for Hodgetts and Richardson, of Wordsley, Stourbridge, exhibits divers enamelled glass vessels of rare artistic merit. "The Woman Bathing" is sculpture of the highest order seen through the big end of an opera glass. She has immersed herself in a river, in a loose nether garment, which, as she rises from the water, clings to her form. Venus emerging from the waves—"her, Aphrodite, gods, and mortals name the foam-born goddess"—is in the sentiment of a celebrated picture by Cabanel. In art applied to industry *chic* which is forbidden to the sculptor is a thing to be encouraged, if kept within due bounds. Lecheval has plenty of this Parisian quality. Mr. J. Locke, also employed by Hodgetts and Richardson, deserves to conquer fame. The conquest, indeed, is all but accomplished. He throws infinite life and grace into whatever he touches. French ladies kiss their hands at his Cupid pilgrim bottles, on one of which the roguish perturbator of mankind has just lighted down on a bivalvular shell that scuds along upon crisp waves. The ground of this piece is yellowish brown, the tone of the coarse crockery used in French *pots-à-feu*. Amateurs prefer it to the dark blue of the four hundred guinea copy of the Portland vase in the same stand. Greek Paganism was a sunny religion, which well lent itself to open-air ceremonies and *festas*. Locke has caught its gay lightness, which in none of his works has degenerated into the broad grin. A very pretty enamelled glass, which does not tax the skill of the draughtsman, is produced by a lump of half-blown "metal," of a forget-me-not or dark blue tinge, being pushed into a mould in which there is enamel of another hue. The upper colour comes out regularly on the vessel in ribbon-like festoons. On a long oviform vase the effect is most agreeable.

Hard pink is in greater request in England than it should be. It is in itself a pleasant colour, but a dangerous one for buffet and cabinet "arrangements." Ornamental glass vessels of the Chinese rose tint look well in a room furnished in a light, gay chintz or white muslin. In a country in which coal fires must be burned from November to the end of April, and in which, in the remaining months, the atmosphere is not free from soot-blacks, these textiles ought not to be much employed in hangings. Pink ill suits heavy or serious furniture. It is in the *schersando* movement in upholsterers' compositions. In a nursery or a little girl's sleeping-room it is in its place, and children are apt to like it.

Cheap and decorative are the bronze glass vessels, for the manufacture of which Webb has a patent. He exactly imitates in them the bronze goblets and

vases of antiquity. A descent to the dresser of a cottage labourer would not render these wares vulgar. Beside them we find iridescent pieces of glass with the refractive power and, in some lights, dark green shades of Isle of France mother-o'-pearl. Their function is to light up dark corners of cabinets. The renovating contact with Japan is discerned in vases, bespeaking a close study of nature in copse, marshy dell, and at the Zoo. Spotted Japanese deer with long fore-legs are here, in a grassy jungle. There, there are voracious kingfishers and dreamy storks on the brink of a tree-shaded pond. In these and "the goat vases" the subjects which are original and non-conventional in treatment, but set round with conventional well-balanced ornaments, are cut in through transparent films of red over blue, to the yellowish white below. A lilac or a purple ground, according to the intensity of the blue, is obtained by this process.

The show pieces of Daniell, of Wigmore-street, are done by Schlegel, a German, who is gifted with a teeming fancy and Chinese patience. He is thoroughly master of his hand. Visitors to the Daniell stand are requested to examine his dinner sets and claret jugs with a strong magnifying glass. On a decanter, Sterne's starling is painfully lifelike, in a very realistic cage, and breaking its heart to nest-build in the foliage around. In their minute perfection, this piece and the "Heron and Kingfisher set" in the Japanese style stand alone in the Exhibition. Sir Richard Wallace has ordered of Daniell a Renaissance dinner set for twenty-four persons. A champagne glass alone is on view, and is marked £7. Very choice ruby glasses for hock, which are not dear, are grouped round it.

If it were not for the general fate of round things to be stuck into square holes, the cut glass throne, manufactured for an Indian Prince by the Messrs. Osler, would not be where it is, but in the Shah's pavilion. It would just do in the Crystal Saloon there, in which 75,000 prisms stud the walls and hang from the ceiling. Legs, arms, and large cone ornaments at the angles of this seat of honour, are massive, faultlessly cut, pure as dewdrops, and powerfully refract the light. The whimsical fancy for a crystal throne was not so costly as, from its glittering splendour, one might suppose. When the order was given, £600 was asked for its execution. Double pile crimson velvet is employed in the cushion. Admirers of the late Sir Gilbert Scott's architecture will find a cabinet to their taste in the Osler stand. Surely it was manufactured for a Ritualistic bishop. I was disappointed at not finding on its shelves a bust of Keble and a Holy Grail. The name given it by its manufacturers conveys no notion of its magnificence. Fourteen feet six inches is the height, and eight feet six inches is the breadth. Mr. J. H. Chamberlain assisted with his advice the designer, who also, no doubt, derived inspiration from La Sainte Chapelle. The lower part of this structure approximates to an altar table, and the higher to a reredos. Ebonized wood forms the base, and is relieved with gold and coned glass ornaments cut in a rich diaper. From this solid foundation rises in the centre a thirteenth century arcade of massive cut glass, flanked with columns and chamfered mouldings. At

each end the table juts out in trefoil projections, which are borne up by glass brackets, in which elegance of form cloaks solidity. In the lateral parts the eye is carried from scintillated column to column, from deep recess to tabernacle, and then to upper tiers, decorated with projecting canopies, crocketed pinnacles, and shafts of gilt metal-work. There is no danger of the Gothic edifice coming down with a crash. From the uppermost tier at the base of the canopies spring the main arches of a pier-glass—a boldly-designed trefoil, with an opening of nearly five feet. This part is enclosed with a framework of wood, ebonized, carved, enriched with gilding, and terminating in a glass pinnacle of great size and brilliancy. Prismatic hues, gilding, sculptured ebony, deep recesses, and artistically-calculated effects of light and shade, keep the cold glitter of the glass in due subordination. Facets are cut with mathematical precision. Each part fits to a hair's-breadth to the other. Had this cabinet been planned to serve as a reliquary by a thirteenth-century artisan, it could not have been constructed with more scrupulous care.

It is not, I trust, out of place to speak of port wine glasses in connection with furniture suited for a bishop's palace. I commend to the future purchaser of the cabinet, whoever he may be, a Gothic dinner set of lip form, ornamented with fern leaves. The bowls of the tumblers are supported on long slender hexagonal stems, and the decanters are in the old-fashioned long flask shape, with stoppers cut in lapidary style. A decanter in the projecting diamond style is exhibited as a specimen of what the Osler Works can turn out. The Messrs. Osler manufactured the Crystal Palace fountain exhibited in 1851 in Hyde Park. "Faire Grand" ought to be the motto of this enterprising firm. Nevertheless it does not neglect little things. A small chandelier for a country-house is simply faultless.

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Some idea of the value of the "Vowel" Machine may be formed when the following facts are considered; not only have we received upwards of 18,000 letters of testimony, irrespective of some thousands in the possession of Agents, but we at the present time hold upwards of 150 First Prize Medals and Awards, including the following:—

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A London Legend.

BY GEO. MANVILLE FENN.

CHAPTER XII.—THE WILL.



HERE was no answer, and the doctor repeated his valediction, but still without effect; so he knocked the glass over, making it jingle loudly against the lamp, and still Octavius did not move.

Doctor Hardon's forehead grew damp again, but very slightly now. He drew out his watch—it was half-past eleven, and he was surprised to see how the time had gone. He

walked round in his soft, silent way, in those boots of his that never creaked, to the fire-place, on the other side of his brother; took the phial, removed the stopper, and smelt at the contents; replaced the bottle, and, after looking in the withered face for a few moments, he lightly rested a finger upon the uncovered wrist before him.

Apparently satisfied, he leaned over the fire where the signet-ring had been cast; then stooped to pick up the tongs, but shook his head, rose again, and stepping silently towards the door, he gave one glance at the bureau, when his toe struck something, kicking it along the carpet.

The doctor stopped and stooped again, feeling about the floor; took the lamp from the table, whose glass jingled loudly, so that he stopped to gaze at his brother, who, however, never stirred; while, after a moment's search, the doctor picked up the bureau-key, and then, replacing the lamp, stood beside the table quite irresolute. He glanced at his brother, then at the door and window, and lastly at the bureau; sighed, laid down the key beside the lamp, said "Good night" again, stepped softly to the door, passed through and closed it after him; when, for the space of five minutes, there was a silence in the room, broken only by the sighing of the wind, and the tinkle of the cinders falling into the ash-pan.

Did Octavius Hardon, in his opium-produced sleep, dream of his son struggling with sorrow and despair in the desolation of his heart—of the son who had appealed to him again and again for the help the father's obstinacy refused? Perhaps so; for more than once he moaned, but so softly that it might have been but the wind, with whose sighs the sound was strangely mingled.

The lamp burned brightly, shedding a well-defined halo for a certain space around; but the shadows that it cast in the distant parts of the room were wild and grotesque. The motionless figure of Octavius Hardon, with the light full upon the skull-cap, was

thrown in strange relief upon the ground, in the semblance of a sleeping goblin; chairs were elongated, while the easy *prie-dieu* that the doctor had occupied seemed turned into some strange beast stooping for its spring upon the sleeping man. The corners of the room were full of dark moving shades, as the lamp-flame danced; while the tall bureau and bookcases looked, in their black solemnity, the repositories of mysteries untold.

Suddenly the door opened again very softly, and Doctor Hardon's face appeared. His brother had not moved—he was satisfied of that before he entered. He came in, closed the door, and stepped softly up to the chair, and touched the sleeping figure; but there was no pretence, as far as he could tell—it was the heavy stupor produced by laudanum. The doctor paused for a few moments irresolutely, then, taking up the key from beside the lamp, crossed to the bureau, when, turning the key in the lock, the bolt flew back with a loud snap, while, starting round, the doctor stood gazing with pallid face at the sleeping man, who, however, did not move. To cross to where the wine stood in the sideboard cupboard was the next act, and, removing the stopper, the doctor drank eagerly from the decanter's mouth. This gave him fresh courage; and, replacing the wine, he crossed once more to the bureau, opened it quickly, stepped back again, and walked over to his brother, still motionless; then once more to the door, to open it and peer out.

All silent; and he returned to the bureau.

There was the large blue envelope, with its great seal; and now, with his forehead covered with big drops, where before it had been but damp, the doctor, trembling visibly, put the paper to the light, when a sharp cry as of pain from his brother made him drop it upon the table, and turn as if to flee. But the old man only moaned the word "Septimus" in a bitter tone of voice, and then all was silent.

Assuring himself once more that all was well, the doctor again took the envelope, and held it to the light to see if it was transparent enough for him to make out anything of its contents. But no: all was firm and close—close and secret as Octavius himself: the folds would not give way, nor bulge so that he could look inside; the great seal was fast, and nothing was to be seen but the words, "My Will—Octavius Hardon," scrawled in a large hand upon the front.

The doctor stood irresolute. There was the fire, with its warm glow; and he thought of how soon it would devour the will; and how that if there were no will he would be the next of kin; and—but about Septimus? Perhaps Septimus was dead; for he had not heard of him for years. And besides, possession—and—yes—that would do, if he should ever show himself. Then Doctor Hardon smiled bitterly, for he had been castle-building, and thinking of the matter as if his brother were passed away; while now, even if the will were destroyed, Octavius would suspect him and make another. But why wish it destroyed? It might contain all he could desire! Could he but have seen inside—and the paper crackled as his trembling hands bent the envelope here and there. Should he break the wax and reseal the envelope? He looked in the fire, but could not

see a trace of the ring; while, upon comparing his own massive seals with the impression upon the wax, there was not one that bore the faintest resemblance, so as to give him a chance of deception.

Sighing, he replaced the will, locked the bureau, and threw the key upon the carpet, and had once more reached the door, when a sudden thought struck him. He darted almost, in spite of his weight, to the bureau, the slow ponderous motions giving place to an eager activity.

He tried to open it with his nails inserted beneath the lid, forgetting that it was locked; but he soon had the key again, opened the flap, and seizing the will, stood with it by the lamp, whose shade and glass he removed with trembling hands.

Holding lamp in one hand and envelope in the other, he turned the lamp sideways, so that the oil began to flow, and the light to sputter, and go out on one side of the wick; but out flowed the clear oil—drip, drip, drip—upon the envelope, till a tiny pool was formed upon the paper. This he spread lightly over the front with his finger, and held the envelope to the fire for a few minutes, when, returning to the lamp, he could distinctly trace, in faint characters, through the now transparent paper, "Son Septimus Hardon the whole of—houses, lands, hereditaments—" then the paper was folded, so that no more was visible, but he knew enough now: he knew that Septimus was forgiven, and if living that he would be in possession of his father's property. But would he if there were no will? Could it be managed that he should not succeed? Doctor Hardon apparently thought it could, for there was a strange smile upon his countenance. But what should he do? replace the soiled envelope in the bureau? or should he burn it? How it would burn now, soaked in oil as it was! And what if his brother thought he had destroyed it? What mattered? he had evidently left him nothing. But he was not sure of that; he might have left him something—something pitiful—a mourning-ring, as he hinted, or a watch, or suit of mourning. Better play the bold game, and burn the will: he might never make another—he might not live; and as his thoughts took this bent, the doctor shudderingly gazed at the laudanum bottle.

Once he advanced towards the fire, and then shrank back; a second time he advanced and receded, trembling visibly, for it was an act of felony he thought of performing; then, fiercely crushing the envelope in his hand, he stepped forward, when the lamp was dashed over, and as he started round a cold chill struck through him, for he was forced upon his knees, while, ever tightening and crushing down even the gurgling cry he half uttered, there was a bony set of fingers at his throat.

CHAPTER XIII.—HARD TIMES.

TIMES were hard with Septimus Hardon, and too often he was quite in despair. There was that difficult problem before him, always waiting to be solved, and he not able to solve it: given, so many mouths to feed, how to do it. It was a problem that many a better man had failed over; and those who knew him, while commiserating, saw how weak and helpless and unfitted he was for the task.

But times might have been worse; for he learned now that even in the lowest depths of poverty, whatever may have been written to the contrary, there are such people as friends, any one of whom, in his genuine truth of heart, is worth a score of the parasites who cling to a man in the hours of his prosperity. Old Matthew Space, oddly as his acquaintanceship had begun, was such a friend; and so, to a certain extent, was Mr. Sterne. But there was, and he knew it too, a tinge of selfishness in the latter's friendship towards Septimus Hardon; and though he battled with it, and thought again and again that he had beaten it down, there it still was in spite of all. The mistrust he had felt for old Matt had somewhat softened down, after seeing his disinterested attention towards the Hardon family; while the curate argued, upon seeing the old man with Septimus Hardon's child, that no man could be bad at heart who had so true a love for innocence as embodied in a child almost fresh and pure from the hands of its Maker. But somehow, he and Matt never seemed to get a jot nearer to each other. Difference of position had nothing to do with it; for Arthur Sterne was ready to extend the hand of friendship to the humblest dweller in the court, and aid and teach to the best of his ability. But Matt said he dare say it was all right, but somehow he was one who did not like to be patronized; while, as to being taught, the clay had grown too stiff, and hard, and cracked, to submit to the moulding of the potter's hands. "And you see, sir, to be able to do anything with me, you must moisten my clay with beer, which softens me a little; and it isn't likely as a clergyman is going to supply me with my malt liquor, and all for the sake of giving me a few lessons. I respect him, sir, and always shall; but we don't seem the sort to mix." This to Septimus Hardon.

Mr. Sterne, finding his advances of no avail, ceased to make any; and soon he and old Matt were upon a friendly neutral ground, while the extent of their communications was a bow upon either side. Their visits to the first-floor in Bennett's-rents were frequent, and in time they so arranged their calls that they should not clash; while, for further convenience, by a tacit understanding, it was come curate, go printer, and *vice versa*.

"I much wish you had chosen some better neighbourhood," said Mr. Sterne, one day, "for your wife and child's sake; and this is not a nice place for Miss Grey."

Lucy looked up in the curate's subdued face with a grateful smile; and then there was a faint blush upon her cheek as she looked down again.

"No, it's not a nice place—not at all nice," said Septimus, drearily; "but then it seemed right in the thick of the law writing, which I am trying to acquire; but it's very hard work—it's so crooked and crabbed and hard to make out. One ought to have begun young. I've been trying for weeks now; but they all find fault with my hand."

"It's too good—too flowing and clear," said the curate, looking at some sheets of foolscap Septimus laid before him. "But patience, and you will do it. Keep your elbow more away from your side—so."

And he leaned over the paper, and wrote a couple of lines so rapidly, and exactly in the style required,

that Septimus looked on in admiration; but only to sigh directly after for his own want of skill.

"Never mind," he said, "I shall manage it some day." And he smiled cheerfully, for he had just caught sight of the worn face of his wife. "'Tis a bad neighbourhood this, sir," he said, to change the conversation; "but it's cheap, for London, I suppose."

"Doubtless—doubtless," said the curate; "but it is a sad place, and I know it well, as you may easily suppose. And now, Mr. Hardon," he said, as he rose to leave, "do not let me be so great a stranger to you. Ask my advice on matters, and take me into your counsels at all times. Come—you promise?"

Septimus Hardon did not speak, but wrung the curate's hand; and in the future he did precisely what might have been expected of him—let matters get from bad to worse, and never once spoke to the visitor upon his dreary prospects—prospects that from delicacy the curate forbore to inquire into, while to old Matt, Septimus was openness itself.

One day Septimus sat gnawing his nails in despair, for some law-copying that he had hoped would bring him in a few shillings had been thrown back upon his hands, with some very sharp language from the keen, business-like law stationer who, after many solicitations, had employed him.

"Don't grieve, papa," whispered Lucy, looking up from the paid warehouse needlework she was employed upon—"don't grieve, papa. They will pay me for this when I take it home."

And the words were spoken in a sweet, soothing strain that comforted the poor fellow in his trouble.

"He said I must be a fool to undertake work I could not perform," said Septimus, lugubriously; "and I suppose I must be."

"Don't—don't talk so, dear," whispered Lucy, glancing uneasily at the door of the back room. "Don't let her hear you."

"Well, I won't," said Septimus, rousing up, and crossing the room to kiss the soft cheek held up so lovingly to him—"I won't, pet Lucy; and I'll try again, that I will."

And he returned to his seat.

"Yes, do—yes, do!" cried Lucy, with smiles and tears at one and the same time. "Don't mind what they said. You are so clever, you must succeed."

Septimus screwed up his face, but Lucy shook her head at him, still busily stitching; while, with his head resting upon his hand, Septimus gazed on that budding figure before him, growing fast into the similitude of the woman who had first taught him that he had a heart; but she looked up again, and Septimus turned to his papers.

"Were there many mistakes, dear?" said Lucy.

"Well, not so many," said Septimus; "only the writing I copied from was so bad; and I've put in the contractions where I ought not, and altered them where they should have stayed; and you see, my child, I don't know how it is, but I do get so wild in my spelling. I know when the worst of it was, it was when Tom would sit on my knee and put his fingers in the ink-bottle; and that is distracting, you know, when one copies crabbed handwriting. But the worst fault was what I didn't see

—and how I came to put it in, I'm sure I don't know, but it was a part of that line of Goldsmith's, 'But times are altered, trade's unfeeling train.' I don't know how it came there, only that it was there, and I must have written it when I was half-asleep. Let me see, it was—ah, yes, here it is, in folio 15, and I began that at half-past two this morning. I couldn't say anything, you know, my child, could I? for of course it didn't look well in amongst a lot about a man's executors and administrators, and all that sort of thing. It's a bad job, aint it?"

Poor Lucy looked up at the wretchedly-doleful face before her, hardly knowing whether to smile or be serious; and then, in spite of the trouble they were in, and perhaps from the fact of tears being so near akin to smiles, they both laughed merrily over the disaster; and Septimus set to work to try and remedy the wrong-doings, by re-writing several of the sheets—a task he was busily engaged upon when old Matt came with his tap at the door and entered.

"And how's Mrs. Hardon, sir?" said Matt respectfully.

A faint voice responded from the back room, for Mrs. Septimus spent much of her time in a reclining position.

"Busy as ever, miss, I see," said Matt; "and bright as a rose."

Lucy, bright as a rose truly, but only as the pale white blossom that shows the faintest tinge of pink, looked up from the hard sewing which made sore her little fingers, and smiled upon the old man.

"And how's the writing, sir?" said Matt.

"No good—no good, Matt," said Septimus wearily. "I'm out of my element, and shall never do any good at it, I'm afraid."

"Don't have nothing to do with it, then, sir; come and finger the types again. I've no opinion of copying, only as a combination of law stationers to do honest printers out of their work. Try setting again, sir, and I'll give you grass first time I get a chance."

"Grass?" said Septimus, absently.

"Well, yes, sir; put you on a job instead of doing it myself—first chance I have."

Septimus shook his head, went and thrust some sheets of paper into the fire, and then walked to the window, where his apathetic air passed off for an instant, as he seemed to recognize the face of a woman who passed quickly from the opposite house, and then hurriedly made her way out of the court.

"Strange!" muttered Septimus to himself; "but there, it couldn't be her."

"And where's my little di'mond?" said Matt to Lucy.

"Asleep by mamma," replied Lucy.

"Bless him! I've brought him a steam-ingin," said Matt, bringing a toy-model, with a glorious display of cotton-wool steam, out of his pocket; "and I don't know what this here's meant for," he continued, drawing a wooden quadruped from the other pocket. "Stands well, don't he, miss? Wonder what it's meant for! 'Taint a horse, nor a halligator, nor a elephant—can't be a elephant, you know, because they haven't got these Berlin wool-looking sides; no, nor it aint no trunk neither."

Let's call it a hippopotamus, and see how he'll tie his pretty little tongue in a knot, bless him! a-trying to say it when he wakes. You'll tell him Uncle Matt brought 'em, won't you, miss?" he said, holding them behind his back.

Lucy nodded, while Matt blew out and arranged the cotton-wool steam as carefully as if it was a matter of the greatest importance, or a jewel for a queen. And who shall say that the old printer's task was not of as great importance, and that the pleasure of the child is not of equal value with that of the greatest potentate that ever ruled; while as to the amount of enjoyment derived, there can be no doubt.

"And what time is the work to go home, miss?" said Matt, after contriving with great difficulty to make the wild quadruped use his four supports in the way intended by his manufacturer—the beast's idea being that its nose was the proper front rest for its body, and that by rights it was a tripod.

"I'm afraid I shall not be ready before eight," said Lucy, bending to her task.

"I'll be here to the moment, brushed up and smart," said the old man. "Why, how proud you ought to be of having such a bodyguard, Miss Lucy!"

The girl looked up and smiled, half sadly, at the old man as she held out her hand, which he took in his own for a moment, kissed respectfully, and then he shuffled from the room.

Ten minutes after, old Matt's step was again heard upon the stairs, and he directly after appeared with a pot of porter in one hand, and something tied up in a cotton handkerchief in the other; while, as he entered, he glanced stealthily from face to face, to see what effect his proceedings would have, before he spoke.

"You see, Mr. Hardon, sir, it's a busy morning with me, and as I'm so far from my lodging—what a fib!" he thought to himself—"I thought I'd ask the favour of being allowed to have a bite here."

Of course there was no objection raised, and the old man's roast potatoes were soon warming, while Lucy left her work to frizzle the large portion of prime steak over the fire.

"No—no, miss; none of that," said Matt, taking the fork out of Lucy's hand; "I've cooked hundreds of bits of steak, miss, and I'm too particular to trust you; and, besides, you'll be keeping me waiting to-night when it's time the work was taken home, and my time's the only valuable possession I'm worth."

Here old Matt directed a very knowing wink at Septimus Hardon; but he was deep in thought, with his head resting upon his hand. However, Lucy understood the old man's quaint kindness, and resumed her work; but there was a tear twinkling in her eye.

"Lord, Miss Lucy," said Matt, turning the steak upon the gridiron, and distributing a most appetizing odour through the room, where more than once of late hunger had sat gaunt and staring—"Lord, Miss Lucy, how I should like to see you with one of those new machines! Stitch away they do, and the work comes running out by the yard."

Lucy sighed, and pressed a sore finger to her rosy lips.

"Spouse I may put the cloth on, miss, mayn't I?" said Matt, who was quite at home in the place.

Lucy nodded; and the old man soon had the cloth spread, and the steak done; when, pulling a long face, he groaned heavily.

"There!" he exclaimed, "that's always the way. Who'd be troubled with a complaint? Thought I could just pick a bit; but now it's all nice and ready, and as prime as can be, I'm done. Such a steak as that is, too, juicy and done to a twist, and the very best cut out of the whole beast. But there, don't let it be spoiled, miss, please."

And before any one could stay him, the old man was shuffling down the stairs, chuckling to himself as he made his way into the court, while Septimus, stung to the heart by his poverty, and overcome by the old man's kindness, left his chair, and began to pace the room, wringing his hands.

"Oh, that it should have come to this! Oh, that it should have come to this!" he groaned.

But the next moment Mrs. Septimus had forgotten her own trouble, and was weeping upon his breast, while Lucy had work enough to pacify the frightened child.

"Don't, don't, darling," whispered Mrs. Septimus, in a supplicating tone. "I know it is all my fault, and I'm thinking of it constantly; but don't let me think that you reproach me, or it will kill me outright."

There was such agony of spirit in Mrs. Hardon's words that Septimus forgot his own wounded pride and misery by turn, in busily trying to soothe the poor invalid, who gladly took her seat at the table, while Septimus, with a smile upon his countenance, kept on vowing how hopeful he would be, as, casting pride to the winds, he distributed old Matt's much-needed steak, not hesitating to partake himself of the old man's bounty.

A gleam of hopeful sunshine seemed to have darted into the room that afternoon, as Septimus sat busily writing, and the sharp click of needle upon thimble could be heard from the back room, where Mrs. Septimus was busy helping Lucy, so that the work might be finished in time, though every now and then it fell to some one's lot to amuse the little boy, who, a very spoiled tyrant, seemed bent upon being as capricious and unreasonable as children can be at times. But ever and again the wrinkles would deepen upon Septimus Hardon's forehead, and he would lay down his pen, in dread lest he should include some of his busy thoughts in his copying. What should he do to better his condition? Time back it had seemed so easy a task, that of keeping his wife and children; but, put to the proof, how difficult! Some that he saw were almost without trouble; wealth poured in upon them in return for their bright thoughts. And why should not he be rich, when schemes in plenty came flashing to his brain? There were scores of fortunes to be made had he but capital—that golden key that should open the treasure-house; but he was poor—a beggar, as he told himself again and again, when, to drive away the thoughts, he stooped over his copying, but only to lay it aside once more and sigh.

Old Matt came again that evening, vowing that he was much better, for he had been trying a favourite remedy of his—abstinence.

"A first-rate thing, sir, for indigestion," said Matt; "rather lowering, certainly, but surprisingly efficacious as a medicine, while it costs nothing, and saves at the same time. A good walk helps, too; but then that requires what the shoe-shops call a pair of 'stout walking,' and my old feet want an easy style of boot. I wouldn't use a new boot on any consideration," said Matt, stretching out a dilapidated and crushed Wellington, polished to the highest pitch of lustre by a scarlet-coated brigadier. "I study comfort, sir. Ease before appearances."

Lucy was soon ready; and then, with a couple of inches added to his stature, the old man proudly escorted her through court, lane, and street to the warehouse, and then patiently waited till her business was transacted. Many a glance was directed at the strangely-assorted couple; but he would have been a bold man who would have insulted the poor girl, who leaned so trustingly upon the old printer's arm till they reached the court, where he allowed her to go first, stopping and scratching his cheek viciously as he saw Lucy tremblingly hold out her hand to a woman who hurriedly passed from the house opposite that occupied by Septimus. They seemed to have met before; but old Matt looked vexed and undecided. Once he closed up, but a glance from Lucy sent him back, when he passed the rest of his time in returning with interest the bold, inquisitive stare of Mr. William Jarker, who stood with a couple of friends in the entrance of the court, watching Lucy and the stranger with some degree of interest, till Mr. Jarker caught Matt's eye, when he turned to his companions, said something, and they walked off together, Matt's quick ear catching the words, "Nine-thirty," and a click or two, as if one of the men carried tools in the pocket of his shooting-jacket.

Directly after, the stranger passed old Matt with a quiet, appealing look, to which he replied with a nod of a very undecided description, half civil, half angry; and then, still scratching his silver-stubbed cheek, he wished Lucy good night, shaking his head the while, to which she replied, "Please don't be angry," in a way that brought a smile into the old man's countenance—a sunny smile that began at one corner of his mouth, and then spread through stubbly whisker and over wrinkle, till it was all over his face, clearing away the shadow that had lain there. But as old Matt turned away, his head began to shake, and the shadow that had been lurking in the farther whisker crept back again, slowly and surely, as night crept down over Bennett's-rents, to hide the sordid misery that chose the court for its home.

"What's 'nine-thirty'?" said Matt to himself, as, passing out of the court, his thoughts took a fresh direction. "Nice-looking party that. 'Spose I button up my coat over my gold repeater. They were thinking about what's o'clock, they were, hang 'em."

Old Matt Space suited the action to the word, bursting off the button in the operation, and then

carefully picking it up and saving it, as he strode off, muttering—

"'Nine-thirty?' What's their little game?"

Table Sketches.

MADAME, MADEMOISELLE, GUEST, CONNOISSEUR, VIVEUR, "MAC," RIVERS, "UMPIRE," and LADIES.

Guest (sotte voce). So we meet again. I don't quite know whether to dinner or tea.

Mac. So have lunched accordingly, eh?

Viveur. Oh, make your minds easy, Madame pleases to call it "a thick tea" à la Lancashire, just as our friend Mac here called his a North Country dinner. He left out the haggis and Cumberland broth, and Madame will interpose more courses than you would have at a club banquet, and yet modestly call it tea.

Connoisseur. Talking of clubs and North Country eating, have you been to the New Scotch Luncheon Buffet in the City, Mac?

Mac. What, at Milk-street, Cheapside—at the City Restaurant? I was there to-day, and a capital place it is.

Umpire. On the Glasgow system, isn't it? Help yourself to everything, including wine, beer, and all sorts of snacks.

Mac. Yes, and about fifty varieties of sandwiches, some of them really delicious, and perfectly novel as far as I know.

Viveur. "Ravigotte," I suppose, and some kinds of game are among them?

Mac. Yes, every known sort, from fish to cheese, and even sweets; and there are hot luncheons also; the wonder of the thing being that you can get anything for sixpence, and any sandwich for twopence, with excellent wines at less than ordinary tavern prices.

Rivers. I must look in there. Lunch in the City is a necessity if one has to go there. Where do you say it is?

Mac. Milk-street, nearly opposite Bow Church, you know. Meet me there to-morrow, and have a plain two-shilling dinner of soup, fish, joint, and cheese, in the subscription-room.

Madame. Oh, there are other rooms, then? But do you really mean to say that people help themselves, and without paying for it?

Mac. They are supposed to pay; it would be awkward for everybody concerned if they didn't; but there is no money taken till the customer goes out. The saving of time is immense.

Mademoiselle. Of course, ladies are not admitted.

Guest. Well, one wouldn't go so far as to say that; but they don't as a rule go to that part of the establishment. They couldn't help themselves, you know.

Madame. I don't know; but of course we poor women are excluded from all these luxuries.

Mac. You're quite wrong, I assure you, for in the large handsome dining saloon above there are always ladies to be found dining or lunching; and it is a place ladies ought to appreciate, too, for the *chef* is one of the best hands at an *entrée* of any that I know; his *salmis* are particularly good, and the sweetbreads and tomatoes there are—

Servant enters and makes a sign that tea is served.

Madame. It is too good of you gentlemen to honour me with your company to tea instead of dinner. Tea is, so to speak, such a despicable meal.

Rivers. Pardon me there, Madame, I must take exception to the words. As an old Australian, I always take "tea" to be the synonym for hospitality in any shape. It means as much of rest and comfort to me as it does to any good old-fashioned family in England.

Viveur. Madame is pleased to call this tea, and begins by giving us a first course of fish. And where is the tea equipage?

Mademoiselle. Here, on the side-table; but there is light wine, if you prefer it—some Bordeaux, for instance.

Viveur. May I say, thank you? If it should happen to be that famous '64 true Bordeaux, I think I'll let the tea draw.

Connoisseur. And here is some Sauterne. What do you say, Rivers?

Rivers. I say tea, and will have no compromise. Tea without milk or sugar. Will you pass the lemon, Mac?

Mac. Ah, you've gone from Australia to Russia, have you, then? You want to take your tea Russian fashion, with lemon. I'll take tea also, Madame. I don't know why I should be put off with a mere dinner when I came all expectation to drink Bohea.

Madame. But it isn't dinner. Who ever heard of a dinner without soup?

Guest. Speaking of soup, have you read that capital story—I think it's in this month's *London Society*—about the celebrated French actress, Augustine Brohan, and her witty retorts?

Rivers. Isn't that good?

Ladies. Let us hear it.

Guest. What, have you not read it?

Madame. Only some of us.

Viveur. Then our friend should answer you in the words of the famous Mohammedan preacher.

Guest. That's a good story, too.

Connoisseur. Tell that first, then, and so we shall get both.

Viveur. Oh! it's old enough. The preacher went one day to the mosque, and on rising to speak exclaimed, "Oh, ye faithful, do you know what I am about to say to you?" The hearers exclaimed, "No!" "Then," said he, "it is useless to address so stupid a congregation, on whom my power of teaching has been exercised in vain. Let us depart." On the next day he again addressed the people: "Oh, ye faithful, do ye know what I am about to say to you?" Upon which they cried out, "Yes!" "Then," said he, "there is no need for me to repeat it. Let us depart." The third day, when he asked the same question, they replied, "Some of us know and some of us do not know." "Then," said the holy man, "let those who know tell those who do not know, and the end will be answered. Let us depart."

Mac. And I'm of opinion that the same course might be profitably adopted by some of our own preachers, judging from the paucity of good sermons.

Guest. You mean in Scotland, of course?

Mac. Sir, as Doctor Johnson said—but I'll not lead the conversation that way.

Viveur. No, pray don't; let us hear about the actress.

Guest. Well, the story says:—"One evening she was sitting in the *foyer*, recruiting herself with a cup of *consommé*, and surrounded, as usual, by a *levée* of admirers, among whom was Desnoyers, then stage manager of the Théâtre Français. 'Augustine,' said he, 'you have always an answer for everything, but I intend to puzzle you. I will give you a sentence in which I will introduce the name of a town. You are to reply in one word, which must not only be *à propos* to what I say, but must also signify a city or town, in France or out of it. I am not particular. *Cà va-t-il?*' 'Cà va,' said the actress. 'Bien,' pursued the *régisseur*. 'Commençons. Il paraît que tu aimes le *bouillon?*' 'Elbeuf' (et l'*boeuf*), replied Augustine, without moving a muscle. 'Bravo!' cried the delighted circle. Desnoyers looked rather crestfallen, but, recovering himself, continued in a pathetic tone, 'Si tu me joues de ces *tours-là*, j'en mourrai!' This time Augustine rose from her seat, stared him full in the face, and exclaimed, with perfectly annihilating emphasis, 'Péris, gueux!' (Périgueux)!"

Madame. Excellent, certainly, but it doesn't sound quite likely; the design is too elaborate.

Mademoiselle. Is it possible that the question and answer might have been previously arranged, and that the gentleman gallantly used this device for maintaining the lady's celebrity?

Rivers. A little piece, set for the green-room.

Viveur. I don't know. Remember what a rage the French had (they have less now) for all those kinds of verbal conceits; and what readiness of wit was cultivated in some of the round games like "Proverbs," "Bouts rimes," and others, which were played even in the presence of Royalty. Then the acrostics, the enigmas, and the rebuses, were all similar examples of swift and ingenious adaptation.

Connoisseur. Can you wonder at it? A people who could regard salad-making as a profession must have just that keen appreciation which would enjoy epigram.

Viveur. Yes, the sauce piquante of conversation and of literature.

Guest. By the way. There is a charming sauce with this sole. What is it?

Madame. Ravigotte. It is what may be called an artistic combination of parsley, chervil, garden cress, tarragon, and all the green herbs you can get, chopped finely. Then, in a clean saucepan, slightly rubbed with a shalot, melt a piece of butter, and add to it a little flour; when this is mixed, put in some stock or any kind of broth, pepper, salt, and a glass of white wine. Just before serving throw in the herbs, with a squeeze of lemon, and a pat of fresh butter.

Viveur. These lobster cutlets are "aux Périgueux," if I am not mistaken. There is the true truffle flavour. How is it managed?

Mademoiselle. That is my recipe, or, at least, I learned it from that wonderful book called "Round the Table," written by a gentleman who signs him-

self "G. C.," and is, I think, a contributor to the *Field* newspaper. This is one of his rules for lobster cutlets: "Mince the flesh of a lobster to the size of small dice, and add to it one-third as much in bulk of mushrooms and truffles mixed. Add pepper, salt, and spices, with minced parsley to taste. Put the whole into a saucepan on the fire, moisten with some well-flavoured white sauce, add a small piece of glaze, and when the mixture is quite hot take it off the fire and stir in a sufficient number of yolks of eggs to set it when cold. While it is still warm you must spread it on a marble slab to the thickness you wish your cutlets to be. When cold, cut out the cutlets to the proper shape, dip them carefully in beaten egg, and bread-crumbs them with finely-pounded baked bread-crumbs. Repeat this operation in an hour or so, and fry them in very hot lard till they are a nice golden-brown colour."

Guest. But what is white sauce and what is glaze?

Mademoiselle. White sauce (*velouté*) is, in fact, strained aspic jelly, to which is added, while it is on the fire, a ball of flour and butter stirred in it, and mushroom to flavour it. Aspic, as you know, is gelatine, or plain calves' feet jelly, flavoured with gravy or stock and spices. The best way of making it is to get a couple of cow-heels chopped in pieces, and stew with them in a stewpan a little ham, game, trimmings of meat, onions, a clove of garlic, carrots, and sweet herbs. For "white sauce" (*velouté*) the aspic should have nothing to give it any deep colour. "Glaze," as you ought to know, is concentrated "stock."

Guest. Ought to know, indeed! Why, lobster cutlet, though a dish fit for a king, would try the patience of an analytical chemist. Give me something simple and easily cooked.

Rivers. Mutton and damper, perhaps.

Madame. Ah! now couldn't you invite us to a bush-tea, Mr. Rivers?

Mac. What, kangaroo tails and green parrot soup?

Rivers. There would be a difficulty, but I'll tell you what I'll do. If you will all honour me with your company, my housekeeper, who is a good plain cook, shall serve two or three dishes of which you can eat without prejudice, and I will do a little Australian cookery myself with tinned meat.

Connoisseur. And very good some of it is, if you know how to use it.

Viveur. The mistake is to cook it again. It should be eaten freshly opened, and cut with a sharp, thin knife.

Ladies. We shall certainly come if you have some of the apricot jam and the loquat preserve; but as for the ordinary meat, well, even our servants won't eat it.

Rivers. Will they not? I wager kid gloves that you shall not only eat but like it, if it be properly prepared. At all events, we'll try, this day month; and I'll call on Mr. Tallerman to see what is likely to come from Ramornie, and on Messrs. M'Call, of Houndsditch, for some of their best brand.

Madame. Agreed. But let me ask you to try the *mayonnaise* of chicken.

Connoisseur. It is delicious; for the chicken was tender, the lettuces fresh, and the endive young and clean. What is your recipe for the sauce?

Madame. Well, having selected a good-sized chicken, or prime fowl, and roasted it, I take care to carve it neatly, place very fresh and fine lettuces, endive, and new-laid eggs for garnish round the dish, and then, just before serving, pour over it a sauce made with yolks of two eggs, six tablespoonfuls of salad oil, four tablespoonfuls of vinegar, salt and white pepper to taste, a tablespoonful of white stock, and two tablespoonfuls of cream. The yolks of eggs, salt, and pepper are placed in a basin, and to them are very gradually added, first, a few drops of the oil, and then of the vinegar, stirring well all the time with a wooden spoon. When these are all thoroughly mixed, add the stock and cream, and the sauce is ready.

Viveur. Allow me to praise the ptarmigan; it is simply perfection. I think he is almost better than the dark grouse; and these have been roasted quickly, the great secret of success in cooking all game.

Guest. Tongue or brawn with your chicken?

Madame. I fear, after all, that you have had but a poor substitute for dinner, but you will remember I only promised you a thick tea. Here are some sweets, however, which I pride myself on. The lemon cheesecakes and the maids of honour are from "Gunter's Modern Confectioner," which borrows the latter from an old cookery book called "The Queen's Delight." Lemon cheesecakes are made by placing in a stewpan a pound of white sugar, four eggs, with the yolks only of two, three finger biscuits grated, the juice of three lemons, and the rinds well rubbed with sugar. Then add half a pound of fresh butter; place the stewpan over a slow fire; stir till the mixture looks like so much honey. It will keep for years in a jar, and may be flavoured with vanilla or cinnamon. When you want to fill your paste in the tins in which you make your cheesecakes, mix a tablespoonful of the conserve with a teacupful of new milk, put a little in each tartlet, and bake in a quick oven for fifteen minutes. The Richmond maids of honour are made by sifting half a pound of dry curd and mixing it with six ounces of butter; then break into a basin the yolks of four eggs, with a wineglassful of brandy, and add to it six ounces of powdered lump sugar. Beat well together, and add some cold baked mealy potatoes, an ounce of sweet and an ounce of bitter almonds, pounded, the grated rinds of three lemons, and the juice of one and a half; a grated nutmeg. Mix all this, and add to the curds, and the ingredient for filling your tartlets is complete. The puddings yonder are from good old English recipes, and so are the marrow tarts.

Rivers. The pudding is delicious, and fragrant of flowers.

Mademoiselle. It should be, for it is cowslip-pudding, and we had to send to one of the Surrey valleys for the first ingredient—namely, a peck of cowslips. These were cut, and pounded with half a pound of Naples biscuits grated and three pints of cream. They were then boiled for a little while. Sixteen eggs had been beaten up with a little cream and rose-water; this was sweetened and mixed with the cowslips, biscuits and cream, and the whole

poured into a buttered dish and baked, sugar being sifted over the top before serving.

Guest. Ambrosial indeed; but if cowslip-puddings were sold by the score, even the Surrey valleys would soon become exhausted.

Mac. The marrow tarts are creamy, too—they would exhaust the London dairies between them.

Madame. A quart of cream, twelve eggs, half a pound of sugar, beaten mace and cinnamon, some salt and some good sherry, placed on the fire, with half a pound of biscuits, half a pound of marrow, some orange and lemon peel; stir it till it becomes thick; then take it off, let it grow cold—and you have your ingredient for the tartlets.

Rivers (to Mac, sotto voce). I see you have followed my example, and allowed your tea to grow cold. Here comes the servant with the liqueur-stand; and Madame has some famous old brandy.

Mac. Which is next best thing to Glenlivet.

Connoisseur. Madame, have we dined or taken tea? I shall ask you to put the tea-cosy over the pot, and we will sip the fragrant infusion anon, while you favour us with a little music. Meanwhile (this is golden Chartreuse, I think), may I be permitted, without breach of decorum, to drink to our next meeting?

Viveur. That is, to eat Australian meat with Rivers, I think; and after that I beg that you will come and dine with me. I will try my hand at an Indian dinner. You shall have a pilau and a famous curry, at all events.

(The guests disperse from the table, and, as a lady sits down to the piano, conversation of course becomes animated.)

Lionising.

LION shooting, though not perhaps so popular as many other sports, is certainly not one of the least dangerous. There are few places in India where this noble animal is found, and of these I have had the best sport in that low range of jungle-covered hills which are situated in the centre of Kattywar. I was stopping up in that district, some four years ago, and had waited for some time in hopes of receiving news of lions having been seen in the neighbouring jungle, when one morning the information was brought me that a lion had been seen ten or twelve miles off. Not a little delighted, I was soon mounted and on the road, accompanied by three of the best puggies I could get. We reached the place in less than two hours, and then walked down the high road, keeping a bright look-out, and were soon rejoiced by the sight of a lion rolling in the dust, evidently enjoying himself, but too far off for shooting. There was nothing for it but to creep along as quietly as we could in the jungle by the roadside, to get within shooting distance. However, the king of beasts declined to wait our arrival, and moved off; so that when we looked for him he was nowhere to be seen. But we were not to be done so easily, and, starting from the point where we had first seen him, we set off to pug him up. We had gone some distance in the jungle, when the pugs led us out into an open space cleared by fire. A little hill was before us, and we were taking the tracks

round the base when a sudden growl from above made us start and look up, when we saw the head and forepaws of our friend showing over the top of the hillock, his cat-like eyes fixed intently on us. I fired, but missed, as the mark was so small; and of course he made off, with us in full pursuit. We soon lost sight of him, but perseveringly went on tracking again for some time, until we met another puggy, who said he had marked down another not far off. As the jungle was getting too thick for us to be able to take the tracks much longer, we gave that one up, and followed this man, making up my mind to try first if we could get near enough to get a good shot, but failing in that, to beat him out and get up a tree.

After a long and tiring tramp, we sighted this last one lying down in the shade under a tree. I made the puggies stop where they were, while I slowly and cautiously crept nearer, as silently as I could, till I was within ten or a dozen yards of him. Straightening myself up, I now saw that he was asleep; but, owing to an intervening rock, I could not get a good shot at a vital part. However, I had to make the best of it, and, taking careful aim at his loins, I fired. He started up with a terrific roar of astonishment and pain, and I fired my other barrel, but without effect; for he dashed past me, and was quickly lost to view in the long grass. I followed him, being joined by the trackers, for some distance; but we had to give him up at last, as we heard a growling somewhere about in the thick growth, but could not see him, and we might have walked into his jaws without knowing it. As we were carefully retreating, a roar from the right attracted our attention, and there, in full view, on a rising ground, stood either our first lion or a third one, looking majestically round him, before descending on the other side and entering the jungle. Twice that day I had had to give up the pursuit of one of these animals, and this time I made up my mind that, come what might, I would not be again defrauded of my rights. Calling to the puggies to follow, I set off for where he had entered the jungle. When we reached the spot, we found it was quite out of the question to trace him, and so I sent the puggies round to beat, while I took up my position in a small teak tree, which hardly allowed of my getting my feet off the ground. However, I was just raised sufficiently to get a tolerable view of the surroundings. I was getting very cramped and stiff with the awkward position I was forced to maintain, when the lion came into view, a good way off. He stood looking about him at first, and then slowly advanced in my direction. I waited, longing to fire; but thinking it best not to be in a hurry, but to let him get as near as he would, and as I could, with any regard to my personal safety, allow him to do. Nearer he came, and when he was somewhere about thirty yards I gave him a shell in the ribs, which staggered him for a minute, but had not the effect of checking his advance. On the contrary, he came on with a rush, whereupon I fired my other barrel. That hit him, but he still came on, and I managed to get hold of my second gun—only just in time—fired once more, and he rolled over and over, gnawing and biting at the long grass, and clawing

up the ground for a few minutes. I took aim at a vital part, but there was no occasion to give him another bullet, as he was dead in another minute, lying only a yard from the tree where I was precariously balanced. As soon as I was sure of him, I slid down and examined him. He measured over nine feet from the nose to the end of the tail. The mane was tolerably good, but I think he was only a young one, and so, of course, not so long as he might have been.

The puggies now turned up again, and expressed their readiness to go back to look for the one we had left wounded in the long grass. As we could not see him anywhere, I again ensconced myself in a tree, but this time at a safe height from the ground, and loaded both guns, while the puggies commenced beating.

As the beating produced no immediate results, I refreshed myself with some brandy and water from my flask, and a biscuit or two I had with me, keeping a good look-out all the time for the lion, which did not make its appearance. I had exhausted every bit of patience I possessed in the course of an hour, and sat grumbling to myself for the next quarter, when I descended and halloed to the puggies to give it up. Two of them soon joined me, but the other fellow was nowhere to be seen. He turned up, however, and met my angry inquiries as to why he had not come before with the welcome information that he had found the other lion, but quite dead. He had been taking the pugs on his own account when he found the beating was ineffectual, and had come upon the poor brute where it had dragged itself to after we left the spot. I forgot my fatigue at this news, and followed him at once to the place. This lion proved also to be a male, and a finer specimen than the first. The measurement was nearly ten feet, and the mane was large and thick. I had both skins dried, and brought them home with me. They have been much admired since they were mounted.

I was told that the Gir lions were given to wandering about in parties of three or four together. It was a most enjoyable day's sport, with just enough danger in it to give it piquancy and flavour; but I was as tired as a dog when I reached camp, and hungrier than hunters proverbially are, by a long way. I do not know what I should have done without my puggies; they were the cleverest fellows of the kind I ever met with, and took the footprints when I could not have discovered the faintest trace on the ground to show that a lion had passed that way. I took care to get the same three a day or two after, when I went to try after the one we lost; but that time I had no luck at all. What I admired in those three fellows was their coolness; they never seemed excited, and crept along so quietly that I didn't hear them myself while they were close by. These lions always choose the shade to lie in, generally under a tree, in some tolerably open place, where they can feel the air. They never lie in river-beds, as is sometimes supposed.

LOCUSTS STOPPING A TRAIN.—A train on the Madras Railway has been stopped by a flight of locusts, which had settled on the metals of the line.

August Fishing.

AUGUST is the bottom-fisher's carnival. All fish have now recovered from the effects of spawning, and their returning appetites impel them to look greedily after food. The veriest novice at angling cannot fail in this month (if he will but follow the instructions here given) to secure a good basket of fish.

The Carp is considered the most sagacious of the finny tribe. Patience, skill, ingenuity, and the most delicate handling, have all to be brought into full requisition to get him on the hook, and then the battle has but commenced. The carp is not only a very cunning fish, but also very strong, and many are found over twenty pounds in weight. As fine, delicate tackle is absolutely necessary to entrap so wily a gentleman, the battle is not always in favour of the angler; for the instant the carp finds himself hooked, he dashes off to the nearest bed of weeds or other haunt, and there conducts himself much in the manner of the proverbial "bull in the china shop"—that is, he has it all his own way. If not prevented, he will wind the line round and round weeds or stumps of trees, and then deliberately tug away at the line till he breaks the hook out of his mouth, or snaps asunder the gut, and sails away, plainly exhibiting, as he does so, feelings of mingled triumph and disgust—disgust at the treatment he has received, and triumph at its non-success. As an instance of the sagacity of the carp, in ponds where they are kept as pets, they get to know the proper time to be fed, and will come to the call or whistle of the keeper, feed from his hand, and allow him to stroke their heads.

To be successful in carp-fishing, the best plan is to employ a longish bamboo rod, fitted with rings for running tackle, and a winch at the butt. Prefer a light cork float, which will carry four or five No. 1 shot, placed seven or eight inches apart, and the nearest, at the least, fourteen or fifteen inches from the hook. The hook should be a No. 6 or 7, bound on fine round gut, and stained olive or weed colour. Four or five yards of a stouter gut should form that part of the line which is immersed, the whole of which is fastened to the line on the winch.

In pond-fishing for carp it is better to prepare everything necessary a day or so before you mean to try it, so that nothing unusual, such as plumbing the depth, &c., need have to be done immediately preceding your setting to work. Carefully plumb the water, and set your float to the required depth, so that the bait and a few inches of the gut may lie on the bottom. The bait should lie on the bottom, for the reason that if it does not the keen vision of the carp not only enables him to see the gut to which the bait is suspended, and to fear a snare, but he has quite a sufficient knowledge of the laws of gravitation to know it could not remain a certain distance from the bottom without assistance from above; or, at all events, he knows there is something altogether unusual in the arrangement, and will have nothing to do with it. Now, select two or three likely-looking places, fifteen yards or so apart, and throw in as much ground-bait as you deem sufficient. The ground-bait may be worms broken

up, or of any of the many kinds of pastes, vegetable, or meal baits—in a pond, where there are sure to be eels, the latter are best, as the eels, being such greedy wretches, would be sure to gobble up all the worms.

At each selected spot fix in a stick, about a yard long, with a fork on the top like a clothes-prop; these are to rest your rod on when you come to fish them. Some anglers stick in an old bush or two near the forked stick, so that their movements may be screened from the inhabitants of the pond; it is not much trouble to do, and would certainly pay good interest.

Everything prepared, according to the instructions given above, come to the water as softly as possible, with your rod and line ready, and your hook baited. Take advantage of any cover there may be, and pitch your line and bait to the desired spot, let out a little more line, and place your rod, with the butt on the ground, and the top part resting in the fork. Throw in a few worms or other ground-bait round about your float, and wait patiently for a bite.

The carp is such a wary customer that you must not suppose when you see your float bobbing about that the bait is taken. No; he is simply sucking it with his lips, and playing with it, to see if any notice will be taken of his proceedings. You may as well, though cautiously, and without disturbing the line, lift your rod up, and be prepared for anything that may follow. Presently the float may go under, and sail majestically away. Then raise the top smartly, and strike the hook into his mouth, and look out for a good fight. The carp makes a desperate rush, and must be humoured a little; for the tackle is, most probably, not strong enough to stand his strength. Keep him from weeds, and coax him, with as little disturbance as you can, to the bank, and as quickly as may be slip the net under him. If he is a respectable fish—say, five or six pounds—and you succeed in landing him, you may well be pardoned if you indulge in a mental Eureka, for it is something to be proud of in piscatorial art.

However slight the disturbance may have been in landing this one, the others have now retreated to their holds, and nothing for an hour or two will seduce them from them. Now, see the advantage of having baited at least two places. Throw in a few handfuls of ground-bait here, and repair to the other; proceed and fish it in the same way. If successful there, come back again to the first, and so on, fishing each alternately.

Another method of capturing carp is with ledger tackle, which is used in the same manner as described in last month's article for barbel-fishing. This manner is generally adopted by anglers in the Thames, and other rivers; the tackle being light, and pastes being used for baits. As a rule, carp are not nearly so shy and difficult to catch in rivers as in ponds: the best time for them is very early in the morning.

The baits for carp are legion, and every bait has somebody or other to swear by it. Bread pastes, made with very clean hands, and sweetened with honey, or flavoured with a little gin or brandy; well-scoured worms; potatoes parboiled, and a bit

used about as large as a gooseberry; and a green-pea, boiled not too soft, is a noted bait for carp. Whatever bait is used, the hook should be well covered with it, and nothing but the almost invisible—while on the ground—gut be sticking out.

The Tench, although gifted with plenty of cunning, is not nearly so crafty a customer as the carp; but is a much better acquisition to the table than the former, and when well-cooked forms a most delectable and succulent dish.

The tench has always had the credit of possessing some peculiar medicinal properties, and it is said that other fish, when sick, seek him out, that they may rub themselves against him, and get well again.

Whatever truth there may be in this, it is almost beyond dispute that the tench is held sacred by that voracious monster the pike, who respects nothing else in the water. Tench, unlike other fish, are very fond of hiding, and are seldom seen disporting themselves in their native element. The contents of many a pond, when dragged, has greatly surprised the owner, who, judging by the stillness and absence of life, has thought the pond to be nearly or quite fishless.

The rod, line, and the rest of the tackle, may be the same as that used in carp-fishing. The best bait is a red worm, though tench will take gentles and nearly all the grubs. When plumbing the depth, set the float so that the bait may just touch the bottom, and not lie on it, as in carp-fishing. The best time for tench is towards dusk, when you can barely see your float, and they can barely or not at all see you. When you keep getting nibbles and nibbles and no bite, a capital plan to adopt is to slightly pull the bait away in the very moment of its being nibbled at; this probably riles his "ludship," and he darts forward and takes it. This plan has been adopted in nearly every case where a good bag has been made.

As in carp-fishing, you must be well acquainted with your water before fishing it. You must know the depth, whether the bottom be a muddy, clayey, or gravelly one, and suit both your bait and ground-bait to it. In muddy or clayey bottoms, gentles, grubs, and sweet pastes are the best baits—a ground-bait of bread, clay, and bran being used. If a gravelly bottom, bullock's blood, greaves, chopped worms, &c., should be employed, and the hook baited with a fine red worm or a wasp-grub, toughened in the way described in a former paper.

Tench do not gorge the bait quickly, so plenty of time should be allowed; but whenever, which is frequently the case, you see the float lying flat on the surface, strike at once. Tench generally rise when they take a bait; and of course, in rising, they lift the shot which makes the float stand. When hooked, put as much drag on the line as you dare to, and keep his mouth open, and he will soon cave in.

The tench, like the carp, possesses wonderful tenacity of life. Many are the tales related of this peculiarity, some of which smack so much of the marvellous, that if only a half be true it is wonderful. One fact the writer of this can vouch for: he has seen them kicking about in tall grass by the river's side for between four and five hours, and he has

thrown them in again, and has seen them swim away as if nothing had happened.

The Bream is the coarsest and least worthy of the carp tribe. He is a strong though somewhat ugly fish, however, shaped much after the make of a pair of bellows. He often grows to six or seven pounds in weight, and affords, when hooked, a fair amount of sport. The same tackle which was employed for carp and tench will again answer every purpose for the capture of bream, though the method of using it is more after the manner of taking barbel. Bream are gregarious, and swim in large shoals, and when they are dropped upon at the right time, any number of them may be taken; for, though somewhat of a nibbler, if time be given him it rarely happens that the bream does not swallow the bait. Bream abound alike in rivers, ponds, and lakes; and to find out their haunts the young angler should carefully notice where bubbles are left on the surface of the water after the priming or rising of a fish. This, from some peculiarity, the bream always does, and from it you may know where to look for them.

When the swim is pitched upon, ground-bait it, and fish it after the manner of barbel-fishing. Here, also, no bait is nearly so killing as the worm. The finer the tackle employed, the more likely is the angler to be successful. The line should never be shotted heavier than the water requires to ride the float well and steadily along.

As in tench-fishing, the angler will often find his float lying flat on the surface of the water. The reason is, the bream is a very round-bellied fish, and when he takes the bait, which is just touching the bottom, he has to lift the bait and swallow it. Then, of course, is the time to strike.

Bream will bite most freely when the weather is warm and gloomy, or when a slight breeze ripples the surface, and particularly after a warm, drizzling rain. The most disagreeable feature in the capture of bream is the nasty slimy matter which covers the hands and the line when one is being taken off the hook.

When first hooked, the bream runs sideways, and, in consequence of his peculiar shape, requires some strength and address to turn; but when turned he soon gives in, rolls over on to his side, and may be brought easily to land.

Trout are still in capital condition, and the best manner of taking them is to tip the fly with a gentle, and let the bait sink to the bottom, and then bring it to the top in a series of jerks. A shot fastened near the hook will greatly assist you in this style of fishing.

TROUT FLIES FOR AUGUST.

Although there are abundance of flies on the surface of the water this month, it will be found that very few of them are new ones, and the angler will have principally to rely on the lists previously given. There are a few, though, which are almost indispensable—namely, the August dun, the cinnamon, and the needle brown.

The August dun, or *August brown*, is a capital and very general fly, smaller but similar to the March brown. Body, light-brown floss silk, ribbed with yellow; tail, strands of the hackle; wings, from

a brown hen's wing. This fly changes to the red spinner, the dressing of which should be like the blue dun, a description of which has already been given. Hooks, No. 9 or 10.

The cinnamon is something like the sedge fly, and strongly resembles the sand fly. It is one of the best flies for August, and should be used chiefly in the evening, when it is often found to be irresistible. Body, of dark straw-coloured silk; legs, a light or dirty brown hen's hackle, with a darkish centre; wings, the yellow-brown hen's wing. Hooks, No. 6.

The needle brown is the smallest of the willow flies, and is a very difficult fly to imitate. Body, a fine shred from the yellowish quill from a thrush's wing; legs, a grizzled blue dun-cock's hackle; wings, of a starling's feather, not too much of it; above them two fine slips of a hen blackbird's wing. Hooks, No. 11 or 12.

Pictureesque Gardening.

EVERY ONE who has witnessed the glories of Chatsworth, or even the minor beauties of Rocklands, the grounds of the Crystal Palace, or Battersea Park, will have some idea of what is meant by the title of this article. They will probably be under the impression, however, that the pursuit of floriculture and arboriculture as fine arts is impracticable under the conditions with which the owners of small gardens have to work; and that where square yards have to be dealt with, instead of acres, the amateur must be satisfied with a few standard roses, and beds of flowers in imitation of mosaics, if he rises beyond the false taste of yews and boxes clipped into rude semblances of anything in art or nature except what they are. We wish to convince our readers that this is a mistake, and that, whatever inequality of means may exist, the love of the fair forms of nature may be gratified by any one who possesses a garden, however small it may be.

By way of example, it may be mentioned that, between thirty and forty years ago, a lace-maker, named Harris, who occupied a cottage at Beeston, near Nottingham, had a garden about six yards square, which he could see from the window beside which his machine stood, and which we find described as follows in the "Midland Florist," published at Nottingham a quarter of a century ago:—

"In the centre he had a basin of water, about three feet across, in which were gold-fish. These he placed in a glass globe, in his shop, during winter. The basin was supplied with water from a tub, raised considerably above the surface of the ground, and hidden by the boundary pales of one side of the garden; and from this source, by turning a tap, he had a miniature fountain. Around the basin were small beds for various plants; and in one corner he had ingeniously constructed a piece of neat rock-work, on which some of the smaller varieties of Alpine plants were grown; and, as we hope some of our readers will follow the example of Joseph Harris, we shall name those that he selected for this purpose.

"There was the pretty *linaria cymbalaria variegata*, one of the most attractive plants for rock-

work that we know, with its long, flexile shoots and beautifully variegated leaves. Then he had another plant, the *arabis lucida variegata* (variegated shining-leaved wall-cress), with leaves striped with green and yellow, and of compact and neat habit. The *campanula pumila* (dwarf bell-flower), with its erect purple bells; and the very neat *campanula hederaefolia* (ivy-leaved bell-flower). To these were added several pretty varieties of stone-crops, or sedums, the gold-striped periwinkle (*vinca minor*), *saxifraga hircula*, with the very beautiful *saxifraga oppositifolia*, and *hypnoides*, several small ferns, &c.

"On one part of the paling, which formed the fence of his garden, he trained some beautiful plants, seldom met with, except in the gardens of the higher classes. There was the *cistus formosa*, one of the most beautiful of half-hardy shrubs, with its profusion of bright yellow flowers, with a dark spot at the base of each petal; the gum *cistus*, a hardy evergreen which, though a striking object, he complained was too strong for his limited space. But perhaps his best idea was planting the splendid hardy climber, *glycine sinensis*, and training a single shoot round the top of his pales, so that the flowers might form a pendant blue fringe to his garden."

Now, what was done by this poor, hard-working lace-maker may be done by anyone who has an eye for the beautiful, and a few square yards of ground. The rockery, for instance, may be constructed anywhere, though the dimensions must, of course, be regulated by the space at command. The material most accessible in the neighbourhood of towns is the refuse of brickfields, which will do very well when nothing better can be obtained. Natural rock is, of course, the best; and if the structure can be completed with one kind, so much the better. But whatever the materials, they should be piled up as naturally as possible; and where cement is needed, it should be made of Portland cement, in the proportion of one-third to two-thirds of sand.

Provision should be made for the vegetation with which the rockery is to be clothed when complete, by making what are called "pockets" among the masses of rock—that is, holes containing earth adapted for their nourishment. In this should be planted any of the plants already mentioned, with the addition of *campanula alba*, *campanula nobilis*, *campanula elatines*, *saxifraga alba*, *saxifraga silene*, *alyssum saxatile*, *thymus Azorica*, *gentiana acaulis*, and any of the dwarf *nasturtiums* and sedums, among which latter *sedum azureum* should not be forgotten. The most recent addition to this class of plants is *viola lutea*, a yellow flowering violet, which has a very pretty effect when massed on rock-work, but, as yet, is more expensive than the others.

THE death is announced from Sydney of Mr. Thomas Mort, who has for many years been trying to solve the problem of sending frozen meat from Australia to England. It is said he has spent £100,000 in experiments.

TOMATOES picked when just ripe and with a portion of the stems retained, and at once covered with a brine composed of a teacup of salt dissolved in a gallon of water, can be kept nearly all the year without noticeable loss of freshness of taste.

Munday's Ghost.

"SHOOT the lot, sir, if I had the chance. I would, by jove; that is, if I had dust shot in the gun—a set of rogues, rascals, scamps, tramps, vagabonds, and robbers. Don't tell me about pheasants, and partridges, and hares being wild birds—there, don't laugh; of course, I know a hare isn't a bird—why, they're nothing of the sort, and if it wasn't for preserving, there wouldn't be one left in a few years. Try a little more of that bread sauce. Fine pair of tender young cocks, aint they? Well, sir, they cost me seven and sixpence a bird at the very least, and I suppose I could buy them at seven and sixpence a brace at the outside. Game preserving's dear work, sir; but there, don't think I want to spoil your dinner. I aint reckoning up the cost of your mouthfuls, but fighting upon principle. How should you like me to come into your yard, or field, or garden, and shoot, or suffocate, or wire your turkeys or peafowl?"

"But, my dear sir," I said, "I don't keep turkeys or peafowl."

"Or cocks, or hens, or pigeons, or ducks," continued my uncle, not noticing my remark.

"But we don't keep anything of the kind in London, my dear sir; the tiles and leads are the unpreserved grounds of the sparrows."

"Don't be a fool, Dick," said my uncle, pettishly. "You know well enough what I mean. And I maintain, sir," he continued, growing very red-faced and protuberant, as to his eyes, "that every poacher is a downright robber; and if I were a magistrate I—"

"Wouldn't shoot them; would you, sir?" said Jenny, roguishly.

"Hold your tongue, you puss," said my uncle, shaking his fist playfully at the bright, saucy-eyed maiden; "you're as bad as Dick."

Oh, how ardently I wished she was in one particular point of view.

My uncle continued.

"Ever since I've been in the place, the scoundrels have gone on thin—thin—thin—till it's enough to make one give up in despair. But I won't; hang me if I do! I won't be beaten by the hypocritical canting dogs. Now, look here; one hound whines out that he did it for hunger, but it won't do, that's a tale; while 'fore George, sir, if a man really was driven to that pitch, I'd give him the worth of a dozen of my birds sooner than have them stolen."

Well, really, one could not help condoling with the old gentleman, for he was generous and open-handed to an extent that made me wonder sometimes how my portion would fare, and whether the noble old fellow might not break faith through inability to perform his promises. Ever since he had settled in Hareby, and worked hard to get his estate into condition, the poaching fraternity seemed to have made a dead set at him, leading his two keepers a sad life, for one of them had passed two months in hospital through an encounter; while one fellow, who was always suspected of being at the head of the gang, generally contrived to elude capture, being "as cunning as Lucifer, sir," as my uncle said.

I was down at Hareby to spend Christmas, as had been my custom for years, and on going out the day after my arrival—

"You see, sir," said Browsem, the keeper, "there's no knowing where to take him. I've tried all I knows, and, 'pon my sivy, sir, I don't know where to hev him. It warn't him as give me that dressing down, but it were some of his set; for he keeps in the back grun', and finds the powder and shot, and gets rid o' the birds. 'War' hawk to him if I do get hold on him, though."

"But do you watch well?" I said.

"Watch, sir? I've watched my hyes outer my head a'most, and then he's dodged me. Hyes aint no good to him. Why, I don't believe a chap fitted up with telescopes would get round him. The guv'-nor swears and goes on at me and Bill, but what's the good o' that when you're arter a fellow as would slip outer his skin if you hed holt on him? Now, I'll jest tell you how he served me last week. I gets a simple-looking chap, a stranger to these parts, but a regular deep one, to come over and keep his hye on this here Mr. Ruddle. So he hangs about the public, and drinks with first one and then with another, so that they thinks him a chap outer work; and larst of all he gets friendly with Ruddle, and from one thing to another gets on talking about fezzans and 'ares."

"Ah," says my chap, 'there's some fine spinneys down our way. Go out of a night there, and get a sackful of birds when you likes.'

"Nothin' to what there is here," says another.

"Why," says my chap, 'we've one chap as is the best hand at a bit o' night work as ever I did see. You should see him set a sneer or ingle, he'd captivate any mortal thing. Say he wants a few rabbuds, he'd a'most whistle 'em outer their holes. Fezzans 'll run their heads into his ingles like winkin'. While, as fur 'ares, he never sets wires for them.'

"Why not?" says one on 'em.

"Oh," says my chap, 'he goes and picks 'em up outer the fields, just as he likes.'

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughs lots on 'em there; all but Ruddle, and he didn't.

"What d'yer think o' that, ole man?" says one.

"Nothin' at all," says Ruddle. 'Do it mysen.'

"For, you see, he was a bit on, and ready to talk, while mostlings he was as close as a hegg."

"Bet you a gallon on it," says my chap.

"Done," says Ruddle.

"And they settles as my chap and Ruddle should have a walk nex' day, Sunday, and settle it."

"Nex' day, then, these two goes out together; and just ketching sight on 'em, I knowed something was up, but in course I didn't know my chap, and my chap didn't know me; and I sits at home smoking a pipe, for I says to myself, I says—'Browsem,' I says, 'there's suthin' up, and if you can only put salt on that 'ere Ruddle's tail, you'll soon clear the village.' You see, I on'y wanted to bring one home to him, and that would have done; for he'd on'y got off two or three times before by the skin of his teeth, and while three or four of his tools was kicking their heels in gaol, my gentleman was feathering his nest all right."

"So my chap and Ruddle goes along werry sociable, only every now and then my chap ketches him a-cocking one of his old gimlet eyes round at him, while he looked as knowing and deep as an old dog-fox. By and by they gets to a field, and old Ruddle tells my chap to stop by the hedge, and he did, while Ruddle goes looking about a bit slowly and quietly, and last of all he mounts up on a gate, and stands with his hand over his hyes. Last of all he walks quietly right out into the middle of the pasture, and stoops down, picks up a hare, and holds it kicking and struggling by the ears, when he hugs it up on his arm, strokin' on it like you'd see a little girl with a kitten."

"My chap feels ready to burst himself with delight to see how old Ruddle had fallen into the trap. First-rate it was, you know—taking a hare in open daylight, and in sight of a witness. So he scuffles up to him, looking as innocent all the time as a babby, and he says to him, he says—

"My, what a fine un! I never thought as there was another one in England could ha' done that 'ere. You air a deep 'un,' he says, trying hard not to grin. 'But aintcher going to kill it?'

"A nasty foxy warmint, not he though; for when my chap says, says he, 'Aintcher going to kill it?'

"What," he says, 'kill the pooty creetur! Oh, no; poor soft pussy, I wouldn't hurt it; let it go, poor thing.'

"When if he didn't put it down and let it dart off like a shot, while my chap stood dumbfounded, and staring with his mouth half open, till Ruddle tipped him a wink, and went off and left him. No, sir, there aint no taking that chap nohow, and they do say it was his hand that fired the shot as killed Squire Todd's keeper in Bunkin's Spinney."

Three nights after Christmas was mild and open, and I was watching a busy little set of fingers prepare the tea, while my uncle was napping in his easy-chair, with a yellow silk handkerchief spread over his face. I had been whispering very earnestly, while all my impressive words had been treated as if airy nothings; and more than once I had been most decidedly snubbed. I was at last sitting with a very lachrymose countenance, looking appealingly at the stern little tyrant, who would keep looking so bewilderingly pretty by trying to frown with a beautiful little white brow that would not wrinkle, when the parlour-maid came up, and announced Browsem.

"No, sir," muttered my uncle; "I'll put a stop—stop—" the rest was inaudible.

"The keeper waits to see you, uncle dear," whispered his late sister's child, in her soft, kittenish way.

"Keeper, sir; yes, sir, I'll give him— Bless my heart, Jenny!" exclaimed the old gentleman, starting up, dragging off his handkerchief, and bringing the hair down over his forehead—"bless my heart, Jenny; why, I was almost asleep!"

"Here's Browsem, uncle," I said.

"Show him up, show him up," cried my uncle, who would not have accorded more attention to an ambassador than he did to his keeper—that gentleman being prime minister to his pleasures.

Browsem was shown up—a process which did not become the keeper at all, for he came in delicately

as to pace, not appearance, and held his red cotton handkerchief in his hand, as if in doubt whether to employ it in dabbing his damp brow, or to spread upon the carpet for fear that his boots might soil the brightness.

"Now, Browsem," cried the old gentleman, as the keeper was pulling his forelock to Miss Jenny, thereby making the poor fellow start and stammer—"now, Browsem, whom have you caught?"

"Caught, sir? No one, sir, only the cat, sir. Ponto run her down, but she sketched one of his eyes a'most out."

"Cat—what cat?" said my uncle, leaning forward, with a hand upon each arm of the chair.

"Why, you see, sir," said Browsem, confidentially, "there's a dodge in it."

And then the man turned round and winked at me.

"Confound you, go on!" cried my uncle, in a most exasperated tone of voice; when Browsem backed against Jenny's little marqueterie work-table, and, oversetting it, sent bobbins, tapes, reels, wools, silks, and crochet and tatting apparatus into irremediable chaos.

"There, never mind that trash," shouted the old man—"speak up at once."

"Well, sir," said Browsem, "they've been a-dodgin of me."

"Well?" cried my uncle.

"Tied a lanthorn to a cat's neck, and sent her out in the open, to make belief as it were a dog driving the partridges."

"Well?"

"And we've been a-hunting it for long enew, and Ponto ketched her at last."

"Well?"

"And this was only to get us outer the way, for I heard a gun down Bunkin's Spinney."

"Well?" shouted my uncle.

"And I've come to know what's right to be done."

"Done!" roared my uncle; "why, run down to the Spinney, or there won't be a pheasant left. Here, my stick—my pistols—here, Dick—confound—scoundrels! Look sharp."

And then he hobbled out of the room after the keeper, when, warm with the excitement of perhaps having a brush with the poachers, I was following, but a voice detained me on the threshold.

"Richard," whispered Jenny; and there was something in the earnest eyes and frightened look that drew me back in an instant. "Richard, you won't go—those men—danger—oh, Richard, pray! There, don't. What would your uncle say?"

I didn't know, neither did I pause to think, for that newly-awakened earnestness whispered such sweet hopes that, darting back, I was for the instant forgetful of all propriety, till some one stood blushing before me, arranging those bright little curls so lately resting upon my arm.

"But you won't go?" pleaded Jenny. "For my sake, Richard?"

"Di-i-i-i-ck!" roared my uncle.

And, wresting myself from the silken chains, I darted down into the hall.

"Here, lay hold of that stick, my lad," cried my uncle, flourishing a large bludgeon; while Browsem, grinning and showing his teeth, was quietly twisting

the leathern thong of a short, stout staff round his wrist.

"All right, my darling," said the old man, turning to the pale-faced Jenny, who had come quietly down-stairs to where we stood. "Don't be alarmed, we shall take care of one another, and march half a dozen poaching—Here, come along, or we shall miss the scoundrels."

Browsem led the way at a half-trot, and, grasping my arm, the old gentleman followed as fast as his sometimes gouty leg would allow him. We were soon out of the grounds, and, clambering a gate, made our way towards the wood, where the keeper had heard the gun.

"Confound them!" growled my uncle; "that's where that poor fellow was shot ten years ago."

"Bang—bang."

"There they are, sir," growled the keeper, halting to let us get up alongside.

And now I started, for in the dusk behind me, and apparently dodging my heels, was a tall figure.

"It's only Todds, sir," growled the keeper; and Todds, his helper, growled in response.

"That is right."

"A'most wonder that they came here, sir," whispered Browsem. "Never knowed 'em do it afore, 'cause they're feared o' Munday's Ghost."

"Munday's Ghost?" I said.

"Yes, sir; pore chap as were shot. They do say as he walks still; but there's a sight o' pheasants here."

It was one of those dark, heavy nights late in winter, when the last oak-leaves have fallen, and every step you take through the thickly-strewn glades rustles loudly. The wind just sighed by us as we pressed on along a path through a plantation, and then once or twice I fancied I heard guns to the right, far off behind the house. But I forgot them the next moment, for my heart beat, and the excitement increased, for just on in front came two loud and distinct reports.

"They're at it," growled my uncle, forgetting his gout, and loosing my arm. "Now, Browsem, you and Todds go round, and we'll come forward; only, mind, when I whistle, it's for help."

The next moment I was going to speak to the keeper; but I started, for he was gone; and, on looking behind, I found Todds had also vanished, quiet as a snake, for my uncle and I stood alone.

"You'll stick to me, Dick?" whispered the old gentleman.

"Conditions," I said, in the same voice.

"What! the white feather," growled the old gentleman.

"No, no," I said; "but if I enlist now on your side, will you join me in a siege afterwards?"

"Siege? what the deuce? Why don't you speak plain, sir?"

"Well," I said, "I mean about—about—a certain young lady at the Priory, you know."

"Confound your thick head, sir! Why, if you had had an ounce of brains, you could have seen what I meant, and—"

"Bang, bang!" from the wood.

"Forward," shouted my uncle; and crossing a small open field, we entered the Spinney.

Now, if I were to say that I was brave, the assertion would be a fib, for I possess but few of the qualifications for making a good soldier; but all the same, as we pushed our way in that night amongst the thick hazel stubs, I felt a sort of tingling sensation in my arm, which made me grasp my weapon more tightly, and feel as if I wished there was something to hit.

"Keep your eyes well open, Dick," whispered my uncle, "and if you come across a tall, thin, squinting rascal, with his nose on one side, mind, that's Ruddles. Fell him to the ground in an instant, sir. No mercy; capture him as you love me. And if you do take the scoundrel, you shall have another cool thousand down on your wedding morning."

"And if I don't?" I whispered.

"Hold your tongue, you dog, and don't talk nonsense."

On we went, in silence as to our tongues, but with the leaves rustling and sticks crackling as we pushed on. Now I could hear my uncle ejaculating; then he'd stumble and mutter, while once I had to haul him out of a small hole half full of water.

"Confound it!" growled the old gentleman; "but I'll pay some one for all this. Open out a bit to the right, Dick."

I separated from the main body, and on we still pressed, rustling and crackling along, while now and again I could make out the well-defined forms of pheasants roosting amidst the low branches of the trees. All at once I heard my uncle stop short, for about a hundred yards to my right there came again a sharp "bang, bang" of two guns.

"Push on, my boy," whispered the old gentleman, closing up; and then, as fast as we could for the dense undergrowth, we made our way in the direction of the sounds. "They're out strong, my boy; but we're four determined men, with right on our side, and a prize to win—eh, you dog?"

"Oof!" I involuntarily exclaimed, for just then my uncle gave me a poke in the ribs with his stick—very facetiously, no doubt; but it hurt.

We were now in the thickest part of the wood; and, after going a little farther, I felt my shoulder clutched, and—

"Here they come," was whispered in my ear. "Seize one man, Dick, and hold on to him like a bull-dog."

Just then I could hear in front the sharp crackling and rustling made by bodies being forced through the underwood; and, grasping my staff and pressing eagerly forward, I waited, with beating heart, for the coming of the enemy.

I did not have to wait long, for [the next moment I was face to face with Browsem.

"Lord, sir! I thought it had been one on 'em," he exclaimed; and then, a whispered consultation having been held, we opened out about twenty yards apart, and went straight away in the direction we supposed the poachers to have taken.

On, slowly and painfully, with the twigs flying back and lashing our faces, roots trying to trip us up, and the night growing darker and darker. Right and left I could hear my uncle and Browsem, while right off beyond the old gentleman, Mr. Todds, the reticent, was making his way. Every eye was

strained, and every ear attent to catch the slightest sound; but for quite ten minutes we crept on, until right in our rear came the sharp, loud report of a gun; and then, after the interval of a few moments, another louder and apparently nearer.

"Back again!" cried my uncle; and then, casting off all caution, we all pushed forward eagerly, closing in as we went, till we were only separated by a few bushes, so that I could hear the hard breathing on either side. Hard work, blundering and stumbling along; but the will was good, and at last we all drew up again in a small opening, panting, hot, and regularly breathed.

"Hist!" whispered my uncle, and we all listened eagerly; but, with the exception of a wild, strange cry some distance off, all was silent.

"What's that?" I whispered to Browsem.

"Only a howl, sir," he whispered again. "Blessed rum start this, aint it?"

"Bang, bang!" again, a hundred yards off.

"Come on!" roared my uncle, furiously, "there won't be a bird left in the place."

And away we dashed again; but only to pull up once more, regularly puzzled.

"Taint no good, sir," whispered Browsem. "We might go on like this all night, and ketch no one."

"Why?" I said, mopping my brow.

"That 'ere, sir, as I said was a howl, must ha' been Munday's Ghost; and them 'ere shots as we keeps hearing 's the ones as killed the poor fellow, and that's why the poachers never comes to this bit."

"Browsem," puffed my uncle.

"Yes, sir," said Browsem.

"You're a fool, Browsem," puffed my uncle.

"Thanky, sir," said Browsem.

"What do you mean by that, sir?" cried my uncle, fiercely.

"Nothing, sir," said the keeper, mildly.

"For two pins, sir," cried my uncle, fiercely, "I'd discharge you, sir. D'yer hear? discharge you, sir, for talking such foolery. Ghosts—posts! pooh! bah! puff! stuff! yah! Forward."

Mr. Todds, who was at my elbow, murmured his approval of his superior's language, but gave a superstitious shiver at the same moment. And then, once more we opened out, and tramped through the wood, till regularly beaten out; and, without having heard another shot or seen a single enemy, we reluctantly retraced our steps to the Priory.

The next morning, at breakfast, the parlour-maid again announced Browsem—for my uncle abjures men-servants in the house—and the keeper, looking puzzled and long-faced, appeared at the door.

"Now, then," sputtered my uncle, "have you caught them?"

"They cleared Sandy Plants last night, sir," growled the man.

"Who—what?" cried my uncle, upsetting his coffee.

"Some on 'em—Ruddles's, I s'pose," said Browsem. "Don't b'leeve there's a tail left out'er scores," said the man.

"There, go down and wait, and I'll come directly after breakfast."

But to all intents and purposes my uncle had

finished his breakfast, for nothing more would he touch; while his face grew purple with rage. Gout—everything—was forgotten for the time; and half an hour after, Browsem was pointing out the signs of the havoc made on the preceding night in the fir plantation. Here and there lay feathers, spots of blood, gun-wads; and many a trunk was scarred and flayed with shot. In one place, where the trees were largest, the poachers seemed to have been burning sulphur beneath the boughs; while twice over we came upon wounded pheasants, and one dead—hung high up in the stubby branches, where it had caught.

My uncle looked furious, and then, turning in the direction of the scene of the last night's adventures, he strode off, and we followed in silence.

On reaching the wood, we very soon found, from the trampled underwood and broken twigs, traces of our chase; but the birds seemed plentiful, and no feathers or blood-stains were to be found.

"They didn't get many here, at all events," muttered my uncle.

Both Browsem and Todds shook their heads at me, and looked ghosts.

"Strange thing, though," muttered my uncle. "What do you think of it, Browsem?"

The keeper screwed up his face, and said nothing.

"Confound you for a donkey!" ejaculated the irascible old gentleman. "What Tom-fool rubbish you men do believe. Hullo! though, here's a wad," and he stopped and picked up a wadding, evidently cut out of an old beaver hat. "That don't look ghostly, at all events; does it, booby?"

Browsem only screwed up his phiz a little tighter.

"Why, tut, tut, tut! Come here, Dick!" shouted the old gentleman, excitedly. "We've been done, my lad; and they've cleared out the plantation while we were racing up and down here."

I followed the old gentleman to one of the openings where we had stopped together the night before; when Todd, who was close behind, suddenly gave a grunt, and, stooping down, picked up a half empty horn powder-flask.

"That's Ruddle's, I'd swear," growled Browsem.

"Of course," said my uncle. "And now, look * here, Dick," he cried, pointing to the half-burnt gun-wads lying about near a large pollard oak. "There, shin up, and look down inside this tree."

With very little difficulty, I wonderingly climbed up some fifteen feet, by means of the low branches, which came off clayey on my hands, as though some one had mounted by the same means lately; and then I found that I could look down right through the hollow trunk, which was lighted by a hole here and there.

"That'll do—come down," cried my uncle. "If I'd only thought of it last night, we could have boxed the rascal up—a vagabond! keeping us racing up and down the wood, while he sat snugly in his hole, blazing away directly we were a few yards off."

I was certainly very close to Jenny that afternoon when my uncle, whom we thought to be napping in his study, rushed into the room.

"Hurrah, Dick! Tompkins has peached, and they sent fifty pheasants up in Ruddle's cart this morning; but the old rascal's locked up, and—hum!

That sort of thing looks pretty," he continued, for we were certainly taken somewhat by surprise. "But, you dog," he roared, as Jenny darted from the room, "you did not catch the scoundrel."

However, after that morning's take, even if a hundred pheasants had been sent in the cart, my uncle would have been plastic as clay, while an hour afterwards, he exclaimed—

"Why, Dick, I'd almost forgotten my gout."

STRANGE GAME.—The *Country* says:—There has been a considerable loss of sheep and lambs from the Norris grant lately, in consequence of the raids made by coyotes, eagles, &c. Poisoned bait was prepared for the former, and the result has been very satisfactory, a large number of the animals having thus been disposed of. A few mornings since it was discovered that the poison had killed a piece of game strange to that part—a big grey wolf. This animal had probably made his way down upon the ranch by following the American river. A few years ago the poison spread for coyotes on the ranch killed a large California lion, which had probably followed the same route from the mountains.

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BY GEO. MANVILLE FENN.

CHAPTER XIV.—FRIENDS FROM TOWN.



H! for God's sake, Octy," gurgled Doctor Hardon, almost inaudibly, so tightly were the fingers clutching his throat—"don't! don't! I was only looking."

"Turn on the glim, Joe," croaked a harsh voice; when a bright light flashed, in a broad, well-defined, ever-widening path, right across the room, leaving the untouched portion in a darkness of the blackest. But

the light shone where the doctor could see his brother upon the floor, with a rough fellow kneeling beside him, while a coarse, big-jawed ruffian, the upper portion of whose face was covered with crape, held on tightly by the doctor's throat, with fingers whose bony force he had at first taken for his brother's. It was evident that another man was present, holding the lantern; but from the position of the light he was in the shadow, and so invisible.

"Light that there lamp again," croaked the same voice.

And at the same time the doctor felt himself dragged at until he rose to his feet, when he was backed into a chair, one hand being loosened from his throat. Directly after, a heavy blow fell upon his head, causing the light to dance and sparkle before his eyes.

"There," growled the voice; "that's jest a reminder, that is. That didn't hurt, that didn't; but it's jest to show what we could do if yer get to be troublesome. Now, then," growled the ruffian to his companion, who was stooping over the fire, "light that lamp, d'yer hear? You're gallus sharp, you are."

"Who's to light the butcherly thing when 'taint got no ile in?" growled the ruffian addressed.

"I wish you'd got a little more ile in you," croaked the first speaker, in a voice that seemed to ascend through a tubular rasp. "Hang on here, will yer, and give us holt."

The doctor felt himself delivered over into another pair of hands, the change not being for the better; for the new gaoler seemed to be experimentalizing, and trying to find out the best place for holding on by when doing a little modern Thuggee—consequently the doctor's was not a pleasant situation.

Directly after, a little oil was spilled upon the fire, causing it to blaze up and illumine the room, displaying to the doctor's starting eyes the three costermonger-like figures of the men in the room; when, seeing his quiescence, the one acting as

gaoler called attention to a couple of candles in old bronze holders upon the chimney-piece, and, loosing his hold of his prisoner, leaned forward to reach them down.

It was a tempting moment for the doctor, and, without pausing to think of its uselessness, he seized the bell-rope within his reach, and dragged at it heavily. But the next instant he had fallen back in his chair from a well-planted blow between the eyes, and then, half-stunned, he listened to the faint tones of the bell, as the men produced what seemed to be so much clothes-line from a small carpet-bag, with which they dexterously and firmly bound him to his chair.

"You improves, you do," growled the first ruffian to the man lighting the candles. "Been all the same if that there jangler had alarmed the whole blessed country."

"How was I to know as he'd jump up like so much watchworks?" said the other, placing the lighted candles, whose tops were encrusted with ash from the fire, upon the table.

"Know! not you; but you knows how to claim yer share of the swag."

Then the poor old man upon the floor, whose wild, staring eyes seemed to betoken some violent seizure, was lifted into a chair opposite his brother, and bound after the same fashion, when the spokesman of the party shook the heavy leaden knob of that misnamed article a life-preserver in the doctor's face, saying—

"Don't you try no more games, my kiddo, or else"—a playful tap illustrated his meaning. "She's safe in bed, and tied up so as she won't answer no ringing nohow. She's tucked up all right, she is; d'yer hear?"

The preserver-handle was very elastic, and the knob tapped playfully upon the doctor's forehead as he spoke. But the bound man was too confused to answer; and though what followed seemed to him like a wild dream, yet his heart leaped once as he saw the fellow snatch the will from the floor, where it had fallen, tear open the seal, and hold the paper to the light.

"What's in it, Bill?" growled another of the gentry.

"Gallussed if I know," said the other; "but 'taint no good."

And the doctor saw it crushed together and thrown upon the fire, where it blazed up and was soon consumed. But confused as the doctor was, the next proceedings of the ruffians produced groan after groan from his breast, as they attacked his vanity, and metaphorically rolled him in the dust; for, removing a fur-cap that he wore, so as to cool his brain perhaps, and displaying thereby a very closely-cropped bullet-head, the leader of the gang, as he seemed to be, first snapped the doctor's gold chain, and set it and watch at liberty; for the doctor's bonds would have impeded their being taken off in the normal fashion. Then followed, one after the other—to be placed in a small carpet-bag, with the watch and chain—the spectacle-case and gold eyeglass, the handsomely-chased gold snuff-box from one pocket, gold toothpick from another. The set of studs were dragged from the cambric front; a massively-set diamond-ring from the doctor's right

hand, and a signet from his left; while as the various ornaments were passed from one to the other, and deposited in the bag, a broad grin followed each groan from the doctor.

"Where's his puss, Bill?" said No. 3 ruffian, who was the Judas Iscariot of the party, and carried the bag.

"Here it is," growled Bill, whose hands were wonderfully active for so heavy, burly-looking a man, diving in and out of pocket after pocket, and now drawing forth a very handsome, elaborately-gilt, russia leather portemonnaie—half purse, half pocket-book—and grinning as he opened it, he drew out and laid upon the table, first a railway insurance ticket, next a lancet, then a crooked sixpence, and lastly a threepenny-piece.

"Here, lay holt o' this 'ere, and slit it up," said No. 2 ruffian, handing his companion an open clasp-knife.

The gentleman called Bill took the knife, and ripped the purse all to pieces, tearing leather from lining everywhere; but no notes fell out, no secret pocket was disclosed; and throwing the remains of the purse upon the fire, with an aspect of the most profound disgust upon his face, the fellow exclaimed—

"I'm gallussed!"

"Let's wet it, Bill, afore we goes any further," said No. 3.

And as he crossed silently to the sideboard, and brought out the port and another decanter, the doctor saw that the men were without boots, which accounted to him for their sudden attack.

The wine and glasses were placed upon the table, and the burglars very coolly proceeded to refresh themselves—one seating himself upon the table, another upon a chair, and the last taking his place upon the coal-scuttle—treating it as if it were a saddle.

"Here's towards yer, old un!" growled the big-jawed gentleman called Bill, tossing, or rather pouring, a glass of wine down his bull throat as he looked at the doctor—his companions paying the same compliment to Octavius, who, however, seemed to be perfectly insensible.

All at once a faint scream was heard from another part of the house, when one of the men rose.

"She thinks as we're gone, Bill," said ruffian No. 2, with a grin. "Just go and show her that mug of yours, and she'll soon shut them pipes."

Bill of the big jaw rose, displaying his teeth so that the lips seemed to assimilate with the gums; and he, apparently taking his comrade's remark for a compliment, walked out on the points of his toes, in a peculiar fashion of his own; when, winking to his companion, No. 2 stole softly to the sideboard, looked about a bit, and then seizing a small silver salver, doubled it by main force, and slipped it into the pocket of his velveteen coat. He then darted back to his place, whispered "halves" to his companion, and began helping himself to more wine, just as Bill hurried in again, glancing suspiciously about him with his peculiarly restless, chameleon-like eyes, which seemed to be on the watch for plunder, trickery, and Nemesis at one and the same time.

It was evident that he suspected a march had been stolen upon him.

However, a few more glasses of wine were drunk, and then the men proceeded to methodically ransack the place, finding a tolerable booty of old-fashioned plate in the sideboard; while from the bureau, another gold watch, with its old-fashioned broad chain and seals, a ring or two, some quaint jewelry, and a few sovereigns and small change were obtained.

The cords which bound the brothers were then carefully examined, and a knot or two tightened, so that the doctor winced; then the candles were extinguished, and the big-jawed man growled in the doctor's ear—

"Now, just you move, that's all; and I'm gallussed—"

The fellow did not finish his speech verbally, but again illustrated his meaning with a tap of the life-preserver.

"We aint a-goin' yet," growled No. 3, "so don't you think it. I have used this 'ere, and I aint used it," he said, showing his clasp-knife; "but it's a sharp un—so I tell you; and where it does go, it goes—so look out."

"This one's been a-drinkin'; smell his breath," said No. 2, nodding at old Octavius, as he cast the light from the lantern upon his wild face.

Just then the doctor gave a loud groan, for his cords hurt him.

"Shove a bit in his mouth, Bill, or he'll begin to pipe, p'raps," growled No. 3.

"He'd best not," said Bill, savagely; "but how-so-be, he shall have it—there's some knives in that there drawer."

Doctor Hardon's eyes rolled in their sockets as he saw one of the men go to the sideboard drawer and bring out a large table knife. Then the head of the party took it from his companion's hand and held the blade between the bars, where the fire yet glowed, when the effect in a few minutes was to loosen the handle, for the resin melted, and the blade slipped out. The man then took the handle, untied and slipped off the doctor's white cravat, and then, turning his back, rolled the knife-haft tightly in its folds; while, wondering what was to follow, the horror-stricken captive began to groan dismally.

"Now for it," cried Bill, sharply, seizing the bound and helpless man by the throat, when, fancying that the last hour had come, the doctor opened his mouth to cry out, when the knife-handle was thrust between his teeth, and the cravat tightly tied behind his head, keeping the gag securely in its place, and thoroughly robbing him of the power of even crying out.

"Now t'other," said Bill. "Get another knife out."

"Ah! he's all right," said No. 2. "I'd leave him."

"P'raps you would," said Bill; "but we two don't want to be blowed on, if you do."

"But he's a'most dead now," said No. 2; "and if you stop his mouth that way, I'm blessed if I don't think he will be quite afore morning."

"And what then?" said Bill, contemptuously; "what if he is? What's the good of an old cove like him? Yah!"

However, that part of the ceremony was left undone. The doctor heard the door close, open again, for the key to be dragged out of the lock, and replaced in the other side; when once more the door was closed and double-locked. Then followed the sound as of a whispered dispute, and again silence, till it was broken by a faint scream from upstairs; while, with every nerve on the stretch, the doctor listened for the next movement, as, still somewhat confused in mind, he kept fancying that the stertorous breathing of his brother was that of one of the ruffians on guard at the door.

An hour must have passed, during which time the doctor still fancied there was a man on guard, and dared not move; though at that time the three visitors were coolly taking their tickets of a sleepy porter, the only one of the railway company's servants in charge of the station; and soon after they were being whirled up by the night mail which called at Somesham for the letter-bags at two o'clock. But at last, as the doctor's mind became clearer, he made out that the breathing must be that of his brother; and, rousing himself, he tried to free his hands. The cord only cut deeply into his plump flesh, though, and a sharp pain was the sole result; though he could tell that his arms and legs were swelling, and that the circulation was almost stopped. He tried to get rid of the gag in his mouth, but only made it press the harder upon his false teeth, so that the gold setting seemed almost to crush his gums. Then he waited awhile, to gain strength; and, as his head grew clearer, he recalled how that the will had been destroyed, and thought of how, had he known what was to happen, he would have opened and read it. If now Octavius would neglect to make another! He was old and helpless, and, no doubt, getting to be imbecile—at least, in his doctorial eyes; and if he would but neglect to make another! Then he remembered how the villains had denuded his person, and he writhed with fury so that his chair cracked.

Back to the thoughts of the will, and of Septimus Hardon; and for a time so deep was his musing that the doctor almost forgot his own position, till the pain recalled him, and he found he was fast growing numb and cold.

All at once a terrible shudder ran through his frame, for a rustling and squeaking behind the oak wainscot startled him.

"Rats," he thought to himself; and he recalled how the house was said to swarm with them, and how that they had once attacked a child in bed. Started upon that train of thought, there were plenty of anecdotes to startle him with the reputed courage of the fierce little animals when hunger-driven.

Another hour passed in the darkness, as regularly and slow came the stertorous breathing of Octavius, interrupted at times by the fierce scratching of the rats behind the wainscot, or their scampering beneath the floor in their many galleries; and again and again the doctor shivered with fear, as he sat listening and longing for help.

But no help came. Neither was it likely to come, since the lonely house might have been passed again and again without there being a suspicion excited of anything being wrong. Besides, late in

the night it was a great chance if a soul passed. He knew, from his professional habits, that no surprise would be felt at home because of his absence, and he had not said where he was going.

Another hour passed, and the doctor sat listening eagerly for his brother's breath, which, from being loud and stertorous, had now become so faint as to be hardly perceptible—indeed, at times it appeared to have ceased; and in his then excited condition he began to dread that the overdose of laudanum, or the shock, had been too much for the old man, and that he was to pass the remainder of the night with a corpse. He dreaded the corpse horribly, but did he dread that such was the case—that his brother was dead? He was old and useless, certainly; but he was rich, and his will was destroyed; and were there no Septimus, or could he be put aside, that property would come to him. But was his brother dead? Death was nothing new to him—he had stood by hundreds of death-beds; but under these circumstances, bound down there, with nerves unstrung, numbed, cold, and in agony, Doctor Hardon had at times a difficult matter to contain himself, and he trembled fearfully with a new horror lest he should lose control over himself.

He listened, and the breathings had ceased; the only sounds he could hear were the horrible gnawings of the vermin. At last, though, he heard a breath; but he shuddered again, for his excited fancy told him that it was the harsh, rattling expiration that he had often heard—that last effort of the lungs ere stilled for ever.

The tearing and scratchings of the vermin now grew louder, and the doctor asked himself why? as, beside himself with horror, he sat listening. His temples throbbed, the cold sweat stood upon his face, and he struggled again and again to free himself, but only to tighten the well-tied knots. At times he could hardly breathe, while at last a thrill ran through him—a thrill of indescribable terror—such a shock as would have made him yell, had he been able; for quickly, and with a sharp scratching, he felt something run up one of his bound legs, across his lap, and then he heard the soft "pat" as a rat leaped upon the carpet.

Doctor Hardon could bear no more; horrible, stifled groans burst from his breast, as, mad with dread, he leaped and bounded spasmodically in his seat, making the cords cut deeply into his flesh, till, in one of his agonized convulsions, the chair went over backwards with a crash; when, stunned and helpless, the wretched man lay in a wild dream of horror, from which he only awoke to relapse again and again.

CHAPTER XV.—AT THE COUNTY ARMS.

THE people of Somesham, whom Doctor Hardon regulated as to their internal economy, were of opinion that there was not such another town as theirs in the whole kingdom; and no doubt they were right. It was situated at the foot of a range of chalky wolds, and in dry weather always gave the visitors an idea that its inhabitants were a slovenly race, and had not dusted their town lately. There was a long, white, dusty road that led to it on one

side, and a long, dusty road that led to or from it on the other side; there was one long, dusty street, with shops and private houses mixed up anyhow; there were a few dusty cross streets which led nowhere; a market-place, where pigs squealed and butter was sold on Tuesdays; a town hall, combined with a corn exchange and an assembly-room, forming an ugly dust-coloured building, which was like the memoranda and papers in people's pocket-books when they are advertised as lost—of no value to any one but the owners; and the sole use it would have been to them was to sell it for old building materials. There were public-houses; and, above all, a commercial inn, kept by one Mrs. Lower, a stout, elderly lady, who had formerly occupied the post of nurse in Octavius Hardon's house until such time as a nurse was no longer required, when she did needlework, and helped in the domestic concerns till her mistress died, and then acted as house-keeper up to the advent of Agnes Hardon, when one John Lower, keeper of the County Arms in Somesham market-place, persuaded her to say "Yes" to the question he had so many times asked her, and she became landlady of the goodly inn; nurse again to the failing old man, her husband; and, lastly, sole owner of the goods, chattels, and tenements of the said John Lower, who went to his long sleep with a blessing upon his lips for the good woman who had smoothed the last hours of his life.

Mrs. Lower made a very comfortable widow—one whose hostelry was much frequented by commercial gentlemen, and those given to running down from town once or twice a week, for the purpose of having a turn with the Low Wold hounds; stout, as a matter of course, for no woman could be expected to make a good landlady who was angular or pointed in her person. Mrs. Lower was stout, but not uncomfortably so, and this stoutness she kept in its proper proportion by a comfortable diet, and by being a woman without one of those unpleasant parasites known as cares. Doubtless she had plenty of the little troubles of life to encounter—those little three-cornered affairs that bother every one—matters that to some people would be cares; but in her case, being a mild, cheerful, and amiable woman, they made but little impression, the consequence being that these acidities of life never ate into her countenance—running down it in wrinkles, and puckers, and channels; and at an age one never dare mention in her presence, or out of it either, for fear of not being believed, she was plump of face, rosy, and comfortable-looking, to an extent that made more than one well-to-do farmer, and tradesman, too, make her an offer that she would not accept.

Mrs. Lower sat very comfortably enjoying her breakfast in the bar of the County Arms, which bar was a pleasant-looking glass bower, with a view one way of the sawdusty passage leading out into the market-place, and in the other direction a prospect of divers pendant articles of consumption—to wit, a turkey, joints of mutton and beef, poultry, and a couple of long-tailed pheasants. There was a cozy air about Mrs. Lower's bar, for everything in it looked snug, from the big-stomached bottles to the great tom-cat blinking on the hearth-rug. No fire-

place ever shone to such an extent as Mrs. Lower's, for it was a very race between black-lead and flame which should glow most; the result being a warm combination, in which the fender, copper tea-kettle, and fire-irons joined, and which every bottle, glass, and object with shine in its composition laughed over and reflected. Everything in Mrs. Lower's cozy bar seemed in keeping, and as if belonging to it—beginning with the principal object animate, Mrs. Lower herself, and descending through the blind, fat spaniel and the black, blinking Tom-cat, to the stout bullfinch in the cage hung in the window—a finch so fat that he very seldom hopped, while there was a general aspect about him that his feather jacket was too tight, for it never seemed smooth. There was a tradition that this bullfinch used to pipe "God save the King;" but that when William IV. died he went into mourning for him, and had never opened his beak to honour the successor. True or not, Mrs. Lower believed it; and, at all events, if people doubted the bird's age, she could declare the part of the story to be true which related to its never opening its beak to pipe the anthem in its altered form.

Mrs. Lower mostly had "a snack," as she termed it, for her breakfast—such snack being generally something very savoury and appetizing, and frequently taking the form of mushrooms, devilled drumsticks, or kidneys; while Hides, the butcher in the market-place, had been known to tell fibs, his wife said, on Mrs. Lower's account, and to deny that he had any sweetbreads when even aristocratic customers had wanted them, so that Mrs. Lower might not be disappointed. But then Mrs. Lower was no mean customer; and Hides said, with a wink to his wife, her money was always there when he wanted it, and that was more than some people's was who held their heads very high. Mrs. Hardon had been heard to say that she believed Hides' calves never had any sweetbreads—a remark conveyed, per the cook, to Hides himself, at a time when that gentleman evinced very little pleasure in supplying the Hardon house, and always made a point of sending in dry beef, and mean, tough mutton.

But Mrs. Lower could always have sweetbreads, and she was enjoying one cooked to perfection; sipping too, from time to time, a fine rich cup of tea, with an odour of a great-many-spoons-to-the-pot power, when Charles, head—and foot—waiter, made his appearance at the bar-door, with his head on one side, and a sharp cocksparrow-look about him, from his beaky nose, prominent chest, and thin legs—his tail-coat aiding the simile.

"Heard the news, mem?" said Charles, raising the napkin he carried over his arm, and nearly wiping his nose upon it by mistake.

"No, Charles," said Mrs. Lower, peeping into the pot by raising the lid.

"The whole town, mem, 's in a—"

"Take that pot out, Charles, and put in one cupful—not more. The tea kettle's low, and the water's all furry."

"Yes, mem. Town's in a fermin, mem, and—"

"One cupful, mind, Charles," said Mrs. Lower, interrupting him.

"Fermin, mem," continued Charles, "and—"

"Bless the man, go and fill the pot!" exclaimed Mrs. Lower. "No, no, not fill it—one cup, Charles." And the waiter disappeared.

"And now what's the matter?" said Mrs. Lower, blandly, as, somewhat ruffled and reticent, Charles brought back the pot, having forgotten that the most important matter to Mrs. Lower at mealtime was the meal itself.

"Matter, mem? Why, everything's the matter—burglary and robbery, and murder almost, and all sorts, mem," said Charles, again making a dash at his napkin, but recollecting himself in time in favour of a red silk handkerchief.

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Lower, thoroughly enjoying a piece of the very brownest sweetbread, rich in glorious osmazome—"nonsense, Charles!"

And, so far from being startled, she cut two or three dice-shaped pieces of bread, soaked them in the rich gravy, and went on enjoying her breakfast.

"Fact, mem, I assure you," said Charles. "That's what Keenings sent for our fly for, mem."

"What for—the burglars or the murderers, Charles?" said Mrs. Lower, composedly.

"No, mem—neither, mem; but ordered it at eight, mem, to go to the Grange to fetch the doctor, mem."

"What, Mr. Brande?" said Mrs. Lower, taking a little more interest in the matter.

"No, mem—old Hardon, mem," said Charles.

"But he never goes to the Grange, Charles; it's all a mistake."

"No, mem, not a bit," exclaimed Charles. "Jem's in the yard now, mem, just come back from Hardon's, and he helped the doctor in and out, too; and Mrs. Hardon coming flying down in her dressing-gown as soon as they got him down home, and a-going on dreadful, and saying it was all a judgment for not forgiving Miss Hagniss; and the doctor taking three men to carry him, being heavy and cold, and almost dead; and Mr. Brande's with him, mem, they say now."

Charles paused for breath.

"But what was it all? What does it mean?" cried Mrs. Lower, stirring her tea with her knife.

"Why, mem, that's what I'm a-telling you: it's a burglary, you know," said Charles, excitedly. "The Grange attacked by robbers, and the doctor tied in a chair with the clothes-line, and laid down on his back, as Mr. Keening and Doctor Brande found him, with a knife stuck in his throat."

"But not dead?" exclaimed Mrs. Lower.

"Oh, no, mem, only stuck so as he couldn't speak."

"And where was Squire Octy?" cried Mrs. Lower, quite forgetting the remains of her sweetbread.

"Why, didn't I tell you, mem? Tied down in another chair, and Mrs. Berry, the housekeeper, tied down in her bed, with a blanket over her head, and she got loose at six o'clock this morning, and came over and alarmed the town. Says she'll never go back any more. Gang of ten ruffians with black faces, and the police are on their tract."

"But about Squire Octy, Charles. How's he?"

"Not hurt a mossle, mem, so they says. Jem says that he heard as Mr. Keening cut the rope when he went in, and the old gentleman got up and shook hisself, and then took a spoonful of

loddum, and he was all right again directly, and stood laughing at his brother, the doctor, mem, who was strange and bad."

"And no one knew anything about it?" said Mrs. Lower.

"Not a word, mem," cried Charles, "and it's a mercy as we weren't all murdered, I'm sure. And Jem says he saw old Squire Octy laugh when they lifted the doctor into the fly, while he'd got no chain, nor studs, nor rings, as you know he wears a lot of them things, mem."

Mrs. Lower nodded.

"And I hear as all the plate's gone; and they've had the wine, and I don't know what, mem; but what caps all, mem, was for the squire, old Mr. Octy, mem, to be quite laughing like; and Jem says he looks more like an old ghost than anything, mem, with a black velvet cap and a dressin'-gown."

A ringing bell summoned Charles away—and, quite forgetful of the remainder of her breakfast, Mrs. Lower sat thinking of her old master in his present character of the fac-simile of a ghost in a black velvet cap and a dressing-gown, thinking of the changes in the family—wondering, too, what had become of the doctor's daughter, Agnes; but, above all, of the shabby-looking, elderly man whom she always spoke of as "Master Sep."

Picturesque Gardening.

WEeping Willow.

IF an aquarium is made at the base of the rockery, it will be easy, by introducing into the upper part of the latter a pipe from the cistern, to have a tiny cascade, and by that means to keep the aquarium filled, and the water fresh and pure. If small, the aquarium may be bordered with rock-work, and only a few of the smaller aquatic plants placed in it, such as the callitriche verna (spring-water starwort), and the myosotis palustris (marsh scorpion grass); but the aquarium, like the rockery, need have no other limits than are imposed by the necessities of the situation. Any small fish may be kept in the water; but it must be borne in mind that the perch and the pike will destroy any others that may be small enough to be swallowed, and that the stickleback is one of the most pugnacious of the finny tribes, and, if kept at all, must have no companions other than those of its own kind. Gold-fish are the most ornamental, but are far surpassed in liveliness by the minnow.

Where the size of the aquarium will permit, or where there is a stream or miniature lake in ornamental grounds, the following aquatic plants may be grown, most of which are natives of Britain, and would form a most interesting collection in any suitable situation:—Arrow-leaved arrow-head, broad-leaved cat's-tail, broad-leaved water parsnip, bur reed, conglomerated rush, floating water plantain, flowering rush, German cladium, grass-leaved pond-weed, marsh cella, marsh comarum, marsh scorpion grass, narrow leaved cat's-tail, natant pond-weed, plantain-leaved water plantain, ranunculus-like water plantain, sea arrow-grass, spring-water starwort, three-leaved buckbean, water hydrochloa, white water-lily, and yellow water-lily.

Besides these, there are many beautiful flowers usually cultivated in greenhouses, or as border-plants, which will thrive well in situations of this kind. There are the blue-flowering African lily, so much admired for its crown of bright blue flowers; the Ethiopian calla, with its large white vase-shaped flowers; the *lobelia fulgens* and *lobelia cardinalis*, two splendid scarlet flowering plants; and the various *mimulus*, amongst which may be specially mentioned the new double-flowering variety, though it is more expensive than the others. All these should be grown in pots, which are to be sunk below the surface of the water. These, with the water-lilies, form beautiful ornaments for the basin of a fountain.

Ferns, some of which are among the most beautiful forms in nature, may be cultivated upon the rockery, either separately or mixed with creeping plants; or they may be grown upon a partially-shaded slope, which seems to be the situation most favourable for them. It will be useless to plant the kind that grows abundantly upon commons, by the side of green lanes, and in the woods of most parts of the country, mixed with furze and brambles. The greatest variety of ferns, including the most beautiful, is found in Devonshire and the adjoining portions of the counties of Dorset and Somerset, whence large quantities are sent every spring to Covent Garden, where they are sold at three shillings per dozen.

Very pretty ferns, of one kind or another, may be found in the woods of most parts of England and Wales; and any one who, with an eye for the picturesque, and only a few square yards of ground within which to exercise his taste, may have, at very little expense, a rockery, an aquarium, and a fernery that will present as much of the beautiful as can be found within the same limits in the finest parks or pleasure-grounds in the country.

If there is a larger space at command, what an amount of the picturesque may be obtained by the artistic use of a stream or a small sheet of water, and the judicious disposition of a score or two of trees and shrubs! The rockery may be raised in this case to the height of ten or twelve feet, and the fernery made a beautiful adjunct to the shrubbery. The artificial water supply may be dispensed with, and the cascade formed by availing of a natural difference of level, or deepening the bed of the stream for the purpose. The cascade cannot be made an adjunct of the rockery, however, unless the difference of level is considerable; and this will be the case only in somewhat extensive grounds.

If the cascade has to be independent of the effect it would derive from the rockery, it may be made a feature of great interest by the introduction of a series of natural steps to the margin of the stream below, a few mountain ashes and birches, and a rustic bridge lower down, where a weeping willow may shade the stream with its long, drooping branches.

A very picturesque effect may be given to even a small shrubbery by the construction of an arch of rockwork or rude masonry, moss-grown and ivy-clad, like a remnant of some old castle or abbey. There are several kinds of ivy, and regard must be

had to the situation and the locality in their selection. The Irish ivy, with dark green leaves, is one of the most robust, and the gold-striped ivy is the most so of the more ornamental kinds. The variegation of this variety is beautiful and constant. Roeger's is a beautiful and well-marked variety, with large, heart-shaped leaves, and grows as rapidly as the Irish ivy. If a greater variety is desired, there are the palmated ivy, which has smaller foliage than the Irish, deeply lobed, and is a very pretty and distinct kind; the silver-striped ivy, growing closely, but with less rapidity than the other kinds, with small leaves, constant in their variegation; the Taurian ivy, small-leaved, with long, slender shoots; and the yellow-berried ivy, a strong and luxuriantly-growing plant, differing from the Irish in bearing greenish-yellow berries.

The Virginian creeper, which is quite hardy, and of rapid growth, might be introduced in such a situation; but, not being an evergreen, is recommended chiefly by the rapidity of its growth. It would cover the arch before the ivy would be half-way up.

The arch, or artificial ruin of any kind, will appear to most advantage amongst trees and shrubs, disposed so as to produce the appearance of picturesque wildness and disorder. Firs, birches, and mountain ashes will have a good effect; and if the structure is near a stream or pond, any weeping variety may be introduced, as companions of the beautiful Babylonian willow. Pendulous trees are now numerous, and of extremely diversified character, and are attractive alike by their singularity and their graceful habit. Next to the weeping-willow, the most common is the weeping-ash, of which there is a fine specimen in the Derby Arboretum, and the finest in the kingdom at Elvaston Castle, the seat of the Earl of Harrington, near Derby.

The golden-barked weeping-ash is of similar habit, but less common, though the deep golden yellow of the bark and the young branches give it a striking aspect in the winter, when the tree is denuded of its foliage. The lentiscus-leaved weeping-ash is somewhat tender, and should not be introduced in Scotland or the northern counties of England. The foliage is smaller, and the branches rather less pendulous, than those of the other kinds.

The weeping-birch is a very ornamental tree, but does not generally assume its pendulous habit until it has attained a considerable size. The nettle-leaved birch and the cut-leaved birch, though not, strictly speaking, pendulous trees, have a very graceful drooping habit, and are very ornamental.

The weeping-sophora is also a very handsome tree. The branches are green, and very slender and pendulous; and the leaves are of a deep, shining green, somewhat like those of the ash.

In the selection of shrubs, preference should be given to evergreens, but deciduous kinds are admissible for the purpose of having some of them in bloom at all seasons.

The laurestinus is both evergreen and early blooming, and the holly-leaved barbery and the nerve-leaved barbery should not be forgotten, as both bloom early in the spring.

One of the earliest spring flowering shrubs is the

cornelian cherry, the yellow blossoms of which appear before the leaves. Among autumn flowering shrubs, the arbutus should have a place, as it blooms rather late, and thus helps to keep up a show of bloom all the year round.

The Japanese cypress is a very handsome, hardy evergreen tree; and the hardy varieties of the acacia are all desirable acquisitions, especially the very handsome golden-leaved variety. There is a hardy variety of the olive, which would be a desirable addition to the evergreens, as it is very compact in its growth, with medium-sized dark green leaves. The Caucasian box is a small evergreen, of drooping habit, adapted for shady situations, which are suitable also for the variegated daphne, also an evergreen, with leaves distinctly marked with white and very fragrant greenish-yellow flowers.

There are no shrubs that make a more beautiful show in summer than the rhododendrons, which, with all the shrubs known generally as Americans, will flourish, according to Mr. Waterer, who is the largest grower of them in England, "in a much less portion of peat earth than is generally allotted to them, and which prevents this most beautiful family of plants being more generally introduced, as on most estates a compost may be prepared at a moderate expense to answer the purpose. Of course, when bog can be easily obtained, compost is out of the question; but even then I find many will carry a better foliage than when planted in all the former.

"Add to the bog an equal quantity of loam, the same of decomposed vegetable matter, such as leaf mould, rotten wood, or turf, with one-eighth part of good sharp sand; this would carry the whole of the hardy rhododendrons, kalmias, azaleas, &c.; whilst the more common—such as rhododendron ponticum, with two or three of its varieties, rhododendron maximum, azalea pontica, and some others—will grow in almost any loamy soil, with only a small portion of the above composition round the roots of each to start them, if the ground is only properly prepared first, which consists in its being well trenched, keeping the surface or swardy part at the top. This is most essential to the well-doing of all plants in forming a new plantation. One and a half to two feet would be quite a sufficient depth for the mould of clumps in general."

The cytisuses are a very ornamental family of shrubs, whether as dwarfs or grafted on the laburnum as standards; and when mingled with laburnums, they have a very beautiful effect. The common purple-flowering cytisus is rather a prostrate shrub on its own root, producing its lilac-like flowers the whole length of the branches. When grafted, it makes a pretty pendulous tree. The white flowering cytisus is also very pretty; and, if only two or three are required, these and the variety with large rose-coloured flowers should be selected. If more are desirable, there are seven or eight other varieties which may be introduced. The weeping purple-flowering cytisus has long, flexible shoots, which reach in time to the ground, and bear flowers the whole length. There is also an erect variety, with flowers of a darker shade of purple. The upright purple-flowering cytisus, so called, is only upright when young, and the flowers are rosy lilac in colour.

In maturity, the weight of the flowers bears the branches down, and the head assumes a conical form.

There is another cytisus, with large cream-coloured flowers, which we believe is a hybrid between one of the yellow-flowering varieties and the common purple-flowering cytisus, which has been the parent of all the rest. Of the yellow-flowering varieties there are three, the most graceful of which is the elongated cytisus, with long, flexible branches, forming a beautiful weeping-tree, with flowers the whole length. The panicle-headed cytisus is an abundant bloomer, and the flowers are very bright. The supine cytisus is of prostrate habit, and the colour of the flowers less bright than that of the others.

The lilacs should not be forgotten in any collection of flowering shrubs. The common varieties are well known, and to these may be added, where space will permit, the newer sorts, one of which has flowers of a pale silvery blue, another, flowers which are nearer red than purple; and two variegated foliage, one having the leaves striped with yellow and the other with white.

For the foreground, whether around the ruin, or in other parts of the shrubbery, there is nothing better than the periwinkles, pretty shrubs of prostrate habit, either green or variegated, growing in the shade, and covering the ground with their shiny leaves and bright flowers. The large-flowering variegated periwinkle is one of the most ornamental, having the foliage very distinctly veined with bright yellow. Between this and the larger shrubs—such as hollies, aucubas, mahonias, &c.—the double crimson-flowering cistus, and the smaller varieties of the arbutus and the daphne, may be planted. These are all evergreens, and the cistus is a most profuse bloomer.

We have shown that the rockery, the fernery, and the aquarium are possible within the limits of six square yards. The arboretum and the ruins require a larger space, but they are practicable within the grounds of all the villas at a little distance from large towns. The waterfall and rustic bridge can only be introduced where a stream runs through pleasure grounds; but their introduction is not a question of space where the stream exists, or can be diverted. A single acre would suffice for the execution of all that we have suggested.

The Major's Niece.

PART I.

"NO, I won't—there! Confound it, I won't do anything of the kind! My consent, indeed! A great deal you care about my consent. You settle it all amongst yourselves, and don't trouble your heads about what I think. She isn't old enough to be married, and I can't spare her. The gout's hard enough to bear, with her to wait on me, move my cushions, and that sort of thing; but what it would be without her, I don't know."

"Very well, Major Roberts. I won't say any more now; but if you will think it over, and tell me at another time whether you are still of the same opinion, I—"

"Here, stop, stop—shut that door. What a con-

founded hurry you're in! Just come back. Ah, what a twinge! What are you laughing at, pray? You're as bad as Bertram; but I forgive him, because he can't help it."

"I was not laughing, sir; quite the contrary. I was wishing I could do anything to relieve you. May I alter these cushions?—there, isn't that better?"

"H'm, yes, rather. You're not so clever at it as Elsie, though. Well, and so you want my leave to address my niece?"

"I do."

"Then, what the deuce— There, my boy, I can't help it. When you're an old man and have the gout, you'll be cross. Well, but Tom, look here. There's the curate, Mr. Leeton, will ask me the same thing; and Lieutenant Holmes has done so this morning; and then there's Robinson, nearly as old as I am—he's always coming over to see how I am, when he doesn't want to know. I'm afraid she likes Fred Holmes better than you, Tom; but as far as my consent goes, why you have it, my boy; and I wish you success with all my heart, and—and—God bless you! Ah! keep back, don't do that—don't touch me."

His auditor, a frank-looking young man of twenty-five or six, with thoughtful grey eyes and a pleasant smile, had grasped his hand to shake it warmly, which proceeding had somewhat displaced the cushions arranged under a bandaged leg, resting on a chair.

"I'm very sorry; let me put it right again."

"No, *no*, NO! Will you let it alone, and go and tell Elsie to come here directly?"

Tom Marshall obeyed readily, going downstairs to look in the drawing-room for Elsie Roberts, the subject of the preceding discussion. He opened the door gently, as sounds of music greeted him, and his entrance was unheard by a young girl who was seated at the piano, singing and accompanying herself—softly, for fear of disturbing her uncle in the room overhead. The room was otherwise unoccupied. The song was "She wore a wreath of roses," and the young man closed the door silently, and stood listening until the last notes died away, when by a strange impulse she turned her head suddenly and saw him.

She was certainly worthy of any one's admiration. Her plentiful golden hair was twisted round simply at the back of her head, while her very fair complexion varied with every emotion. A deep flush mounted to her temples now, on finding that she was not alone.

"Were you looking for me, Mr. Marshall?"

"Yes, I have just come down from speaking to your uncle, and he wishes for you. I had not the heart to interrupt your song."

"Oh, thank you. I will go to him at once."

He watched her as she glided past him and up the stairs, and then turned away with a sigh.

"Heigho, I am afraid the old man's right, and she is taken with the dash and good looks of that dandy lieutenant. My poor darling, what a fate for you it would be!"

He entered the library, took up a book and tried to read; but in vain—the letters danced before his eyes; and, giving up the attempt, he returned it to its

shelf, and paced slowly up and down the room for some time. At last he looked from the window, to see Elsie cross the lawn with a pair of scissors, evidently intending to procure some flowers for the dinner-table, as was her wont. He watched her white dress moving here and there among the rose-bushes, and then started and bit his lip with annoyance; for she was joined by Lieutenant Holmes, who reached the flowers that were too high for her, bent down other branches till she could cut off the flowers herself, and whose very attitudes spoke to Tom Marshall of the pretty nothings a man of his description has always ready on his lips. He saw her raise her eyes laughingly to his, blushing as she met his admiring gaze, and he felt ready to curse his own folly in not seizing his opportunity when she went out.

"Any one but him," he muttered. "I would rather see her take to that long curate, who is always talking about Easter or harvest decorations, than to a man whose brains—if he has any—are all devoted to betting and gambling. What can she see in him, I wonder."

"What are you growling about?" said a voice behind him.

And, turning, he met the good-humouredly quizzical glance of a pair of brown eyes, belonging to a curly-headed little man, with a round face, which never looked at home in any other expression but a smile, and was even now relaxing into a broad grin.

"Growling!" repeated Marshall, smiling in spite of himself—"was I growling?"

"Of course you were; but you needn't tell me why. I can see plain enough. You and Holmes are at loggerheads about a certain young lady. I dare say I should have a go in myself, only I know it wouldn't be any good with two such formidable rivals in the field. But, my dear boy, I wouldn't be too sanguine if I were you. It's easy to see which way the wind blows."

Marshall turned to the window again, and affected not to hear.

"You see, Tom, Mrs. Ingleby is on his side, and no girl could stand against such a woman as that, especially as she's her nearest female relative. You should have secured the aunt's goodwill at first. Fred Holmes flatters her, pays her all sorts of little attentions, and pretends to think so much of her opinion on everything, that she dins his praises into Miss Elsie's ears all day long."

The young man turned round angrily; but at sight of the other's face his frown disappeared, and he laughed, half impatiently.

"I never saw such a fellow as you, Bertram. I believe you did anything you liked when you were a boy at school; for no master could have flogged you after he'd looked at your face. Come along, and have a game at billiards."

"Oh, all right! I'm willing. But I say, Tom, don't you think the lieutenant's a regular cad? He's always running you down; says you are cynical, a misanthrope—in short, a regular humbug."

"Con— There, what an idiot I am! Let him say what he likes."

And, taking the other by the arm, he led him across the hall to the billiard-room. At the same

instant Elsie and Lieutenant Holmes entered from the garden, the former looking very sweet and innocent in her simple white dress. Her hands were full of flowers, and, as Marshall and Bertram stepped back for her to pass, a white rosebud fell to the ground. The lieutenant snatched it up.

"I shall keep this as an emblem of you, Miss Roberts," he said, in a low tone.

And a vivid blush overspread Elsie's features as she glanced at Marshall, and saw from his face that he had heard.

"You are welcome to it—I have plenty," she said, the next minute. "Would not you like one, Mr. Bertram; and you, Mr. Marshall, for your button-holes?"

She held them out laughingly for Bertram to choose, when he selected a carnation, and fixed it in his coat, while she held them to Marshall—the lieutenant looking on with a supercilious stare.

His hand trembled as he drew a white rosebud from the rest, with a deep-toned "Thank you," and Elsie, without raising her eyes, murmured something about her uncle, and ran lightly upstairs.

Tom Marshall's eyes and the lieutenant's met, as the former adjusted his rose, with a keen scrutiny on the one side and a sneering expression on the other, while Bertram looked at both with a smile.

"We are going to the billiard-room," he said the next minute; "will you join us, Holmes?"

"May as well," was the ungracious response.

And the three were soon engaged in a game in which Holmes was victorious, when a second was begun. In this Marshall played more carefully, and won with ease, Bertram being left far behind. Tom then put his cue in the rack.

"I have a letter to write before dinner," he said to Bertram, and quitted the room.

"By Jove!" said Holmes, as the door closed, "that fellow gets more unendurable every day. He plays like a sharper too. I kept my eye on the balls to see that all was square."

"You two don't seem to quite hit it off," was the reply.

And the lieutenant stared at the smiling, round face of his companion, in a vain endeavour to penetrate through that good-humoured exterior and discover his real thoughts.

"What's your opinion of him?" he asked.

"My opinion? I haven't one. I came across him swearing to himself about you this morning. Said he'd rather see the young lady married to the Rev. Daddy Longlegs than to a snob who didn't understand anything but horses."

"He did, did he? Confound his impudence! I sha'n't forget that."

The white rose fell from his coat as he spoke, and he picked it up and crushed it in his fingers in his indignation. As he cooled down, he looked at it.

"Pooh," said he, "I've spoilt it—and there goes the dressing bell."

He threw down the crushed flower, and, going into the garden, carefully examined the rose-bushes till he found another almost exactly like it, when he returned to the house, and ran upstairs to dress for dinner.

Elsie, before descending, went into her uncle's room to give him a kiss, putting her soft arms round his neck, and laying her cheek against his bald head.

"Is the gout better, uncle, dear?"

"No, it isn't. Are you going down to dinner? Yes? Come here and let's look at you. Heigho! I don't wonder at them falling in love; but I don't want to lose you."

"And I'm sure I don't want to leave you, uncle," said the girl, her eyes filling.

"Ah! I don't know so much about that. How do you like Lieutenant Holmes?"

"Oh, very well, uncle. Not half as well as you," said Elsie, blushing.

"Well, do you like him better than Tom Marshall?"

"I think so—no, I don't know. Indeed, I don't know. But it doesn't matter, uncle, does it? I shall soon think you do want to get rid of me."

"And so I do."

"Uncle!"

"I want you to go down to dinner. And Elsie, my darling, tell some one to bring me my glasses. I left them in the billiard-room before this confounded gout came on, and I've never had them since."

"I will fetch them, uncle, dear."

And she hurried away. The spectacles were some little trouble to find, but she discovered them at last, and was quitting the room, when something on the floor caught her eye.

"Poor little flower!" she thought, "you are soon thrown aside. I wonder to which that belonged. I shall see at dinner."

As she entered the drawing-room, she gave a quick glance from one to the other of the young men, and saw that the lieutenant still wore a white rose, while Tom Marshall had no flower; and she scarcely knew whether to feel disappointed or pleased.

The dinner bell rang almost directly, and they went down. Marshall, who sat opposite, saw with inexpressible pain that Elsie was more than usually animated, and seemed to be thoroughly enjoying the lieutenant's conversation, while she scarcely gave a glance in his direction. When dinner was over, he went to her side as soon as he could, and entered into conversation. But her manner was cold and constrained; and when Holmes came up and asked her to sing, she rose with alacrity, and went with him to the piano.

Marshall sat and looked on, with a feeling of despair at his heart, as she sang song after song, in a clear, sweet voice that thrilled through him; while Lieutenant Holmes stood turning over the leaves for her, and making remarks in the intervals in a low tone, meant only for her ear.

"What have I done to offend her?" he asked himself. "She seems farther from me to-day than ever before. I must go. I cannot stay here and see her drift into a marriage with him. I have been mad in imagining that she was growing to care for me, and in dreaming of a future with her always near me. I must begin again, and try to face it without her. Elsie, my darling, what a dreary, hopeless look-out it is!"

"*Il penseroso!*" said Bertram's voice, interrupting the current of his thoughts. "This is the third time I have asked you a question."

"What question?" asked Marshall, rousing himself.

"What a couple they make—don't you think so? Mrs. Ingleby has twice made that remark to me, so I suppose they do. Fred looks handsome to-night, doesn't he?"

"Perhaps so, I'm no judge," said Marshall. "But why do you ask me?"

"Well, you see, I got tired of talking to the old lady, and you looked so in the downs, I thought I'd come and cheer you up a bit."

"Thanks; but since you feel so charitably disposed, suppose you go and cheer up the major. He will be grateful, and I'm not."

"Good advice—I'll take it, on condition that you go and talk to Mrs. I., and make yourself agreeable."

"Agreed," said the other.

And, taking a seat by the side of the major's sister, he tried to seem at ease as he chatted with her, until Elsie left the piano.

"You must sing something, Lieutenant Holmes," she was saying; but he refused, on the plea of a sore throat.

"Ask Bertram—oh, he's gone. Perhaps Mr. Marshall will give us a song."

"Yes, do sing or play something, Mr. Marshall," said Mrs. Ingleby.

And Tom, after waiting a minute or two to see if Elsie would speak, crossed the room and sat down to the piano. He was a splendid musician, and, as he forgot everything while he played, he did not know that the plaintive, heart-stirring melody he called forth from the instrument was doing him more service than all the lieutenant's neatly-turned speeches did for him. The girl listened breathlessly, quite oblivious of the fact that her aunt had twice addressed her, and, as he concluded, she opened her lips to entreat him to go on, but altered her mind and was silent.

All this time Bertram was sitting with the major, more beaming than ever in expression.

"What are they doing downstairs, Bertram?" asked the old gentleman, when other subjects were exhausted.

"Your niece and the lieutenant are making love at the piano. Marshall is apparently making up poems, mentally, of a melancholy description; and Mrs. Ingleby is keeping a satisfied watch over every one's behaviour."

"Don't you try to be clever, Bertram; because you haven't got it in you."

"Nothing was farther from my thoughts, I assure you, major. I merely stated the facts as they presented themselves to me."

"Don't believe a word of it. Elsie has more sense—at least, she ought to have—than to like him. I wish I hadn't asked him down. His father was an old friend of mine, or else I should not have done so."

"I shall go back to town to-morrow," said Marshall to himself, as he went upstairs that night. "I must forget all this madness in hard work."

He leaned out of his window before closing it, and

could dimly make out the figure of Holmes, leaning against a tree, smoking, and looking up at the house.

"If she only knew him as he is," he thought, "she could not care for him. I wonder how long he will stay. Whatever did the major ask him down for?"

And Elsie, after bidding her uncle good night, sat for a long time, before seeking her pillow, with her elbows on the dressing table, her long, fair hair loosed, and rippling below her waist, recalling the events of the day, but, without deriving much pleasure from the recollection apparently, for a tear or two stole from under her eyelids.

"He is so cold and strange to me," she thought. "It is plain enough that he does not care for me; though I fancied he did before the lieutenant came. I will think no more of him, and think of the other, who does like me, for he has almost told me so. He is so tall and brave, and looks so strong and manly; and Tom Marshall seems so quiet, and reserved, and cold beside him. For the future I will take the good the gods provide me, or else make up my mind to stay with uncle always."

And she went to bed, to dream of being married to Lieutenant Holmes; while Tom Marshall, who was the clergyman, looked sternly at her, and broke off in the middle of the service to show her a white rosebud, carefully pressed between the leaves of the Bible.

Bicycling.

BY GERALD F. COBB,

*Chairman of the Cambridge University Bicycle Club,
Chairman of the Bicycle Union.*

AS attention has recently been called, both in Parliament and in the press, to the dangers arising from bicycling, and to the need of some legislation on the subject, perhaps you will kindly allow me space for some remarks on this question. To ensure a fair treatment of the whole matter, it is desirable at the outset to remove some misconceptions and supply some omissions in what would seem to be the popular view of the subject. The statement made by Mr. Salaman, the other day, to the President of the Local Government Board, will have effectually dispelled the notion that the trade of bicycle-making is commercially unimportant, and that its restriction would be attended by no serious detriment to industrial prosperity.

It is clear that a trade which already represents capital in millions could not be touched without injurious results. There are, however, other points of possibly greater national importance even than the industrial question, which entitle the whole subject to careful consideration; and it is these to which I wish to direct public attention. In the view of the many, bicycling is a mere physical pastime, confined, for the most part, to a certain class of young men more or less connected with the desk or counter. Even if this view were approximately correct, there would still be something to be said for a pursuit which enabled this numerous and important class to substitute fresh air, bracing exercise, and the sight of

the country, for a City youth's usual evening programme.

But bicycling has far higher and more practical claims to consideration than this. The ease with which a bicycle can be driven, the distance it enables its rider to cover, its speed, the rapidity with which it can be "brought round from the stable" (so to speak) at a moment's notice—all these advantages, added to its durability and comparative cheapness, render it by far the best form of road-locomotion for all to whom economy, whether of time or money, is an object. As such, its use is daily extending among professional men of all classes, especially clergymen and doctors; whilst, as the price of bicycles in the second-hand market gradually gets lower, working men are getting more and more to use them for their daily transit to and from their work. To these latter it is really an incalculable boon, for it enables them to live farther away from their work, and to substitute for themselves and their families a cheap and healthy home at a moderate distance from their town for the expensive insalubrity of the urban rookery.

The social importance of this benefit can hardly be over-estimated. In those classes where its use may perhaps be fairly considered a pastime rather than a professional necessity, its popularity is enormously on the increase.

At the present time, in my own university, one undergraduate in every five possesses a bicycle, and there are many members of the senate holding university or college office who have substituted a bicycle ride for the traditional academic "constitutional." As compared with other forms of exercise, it has much to commend it from a merely physical point of view. It is a great mistake to suppose, as most non-bicyclists do, that it exercises the legs only. The fact is, there are few forms of athletics, if any, which exercise the body so entirely in every part as bicycling; the reason of this being that its main work consists in *balancing*, in which (as in skating, rope-dancing, &c.) every portion of the body is more or less brought into play.

This explains the fact that the process of learning to ride is one involving, in most cases, such excessive fatigue. Its other chief physical merit as an exercise is the rapidity with which the bicyclist is borne through the air, thus procuring for him, even on the stillest and most sultry day, approximately the same effect as if a fresh breeze were blowing; and in the same connection may be mentioned its advantage as enabling him to get thorough change of air, as he passes over many different soils and local conditions of climate, &c., in the course of his ride.

It will be readily understood that to students a form of exercise which confers this benefit must be of peculiar value. It is no uncommon thing for our students to go out some twenty or thirty miles by train and bicycle home (or *vice versa*, according to the direction of the wind), and thus get a thorough change of air and scene in the course of an ordinary afternoon's outing.

Physically speaking, therefore, this form of exercise has much to recommend it.

But there are other points about it not to be lost

sight of. There are few pastimes which present such frequent opportunities for the exercise of judgment, nerve, and pluck as bicycling. The most skilful rider on the very best machine is continually exposed to obstacles and difficulties such as beset no other form of locomotion. A rough and rutty road; the erratic movements of cows, sheep, and pigs; the ignorance or stupidity, and I regret to add in some cases the churlish spitefulness, of other road-travellers, are constantly presenting to him the problem, "Shall I dismount or not?" In solving it the bicyclist starts with the axiom, "Never dismount until you see it is absolutely necessary." For dismounting is easy, and can be done at the last moment.

A remount is another matter, which, if surface gradient or wind be unfavourable, may be an affair of difficulty, if not of waiting. His postulates are of this kind:—"Surely that boy, having turned round at my whistle, will ultimately cease gaping at me, and yield at last to my reiterated entreaty to him to stir up those recumbent sheep, or tighten the string of that ubiquitous pig." Or again:—"Surely that good-natured looking farmer in his gig, who is grinning at me in placid recognition, will eventually pull over, leave me my rut, and not strand me on those stones or on that mud heap." Such is the bicyclist's problem and its conditions; and its solution will be readily admitted to make full demand on his nerve, skill, and promptitude.

If he decide to dismount, the decision and the act must be instantaneous; if the other solution be adopted, the greatest coolness of head and hand is required to effect it in safety.

As regards pluck, there are very few bicyclists who cannot recall some spills of a more or less serious kind. I know what spills in the hunting field are like; but these, as a rule, are "down and feathers" as compared with the collision which the bicyclist sustains with the road surface: it is more like being discharged from a catapult than from a saddle. Every day some rider or other is precipitated to the ground by this ruthless mechanical force; and though the results are, happily, as in the hunting field, seldom serious, yet the shock for the time is very considerable. And yet, after a few minutes to recover his breath, wipe the dust off, and bind up a scraped shin or cut finger, the bicyclist is ready to mount again as if nothing had happened.

Among the moral characteristics which have made us as a nation what we are, few have played so important a part as nerve and pluck; and it is this very need of their exercise which makes bicycling so popular with us, and has apparently (as in the case of cricket, &c.) prevented its taking root on the Continent. It would be nothing short of a disaster if a pastime which tends to develop these important factors of character, and which is now rapidly assuming national proportions, should be placed at the mercy of repressive local legislation. Local authority is generally in the hands of persons who may no doubt have been robust and muscular in their day, but whose age or close business avocations have rendered them for the most part feeble-sinewed and delicate-nerved by the time they arrive at municipal distinction.

One more point to the credit of bicycling remains to be noticed. Attention has been called to its physical and moral recommendations; it has also its intellectual value. I do not now allude to the comfort and ease with which its silence enables companions to converse together—in which point it is superior even to walking—but to the opportunity it gives for enlarging our acquaintance with the current condition and past history of our country. Even at first, when charmed by the novelty of the thing, the bicyclist is content to go in this direction and that without any definite object in view beyond the mere enjoyment of the exercise, he cannot help visiting places and seeing things and persons he would probably never have otherwise seen or heard of. But after this first stage of the bicycling fever is over, the great aim then is to discover objects for a ride; and considering what a wide area a bicyclist has at command, even for an ordinary ride, there is never any lack of choice.

The selection made, it naturally follows that he tries to read up the main facts which make the object of his ride interesting; and it is this which promises to make the pastime indirectly such a general educator. The accounts of wars and sieges, the lives of local celebrities, the records of old families, handbooks of art, architecture, antiquities, geology, manufacture, &c., which might otherwise have remained sealed books to him, are now periodically studied by the bicyclist for the sake of giving a point and interest to his ride.

When it is added that every year more and more bicyclists cross the Channel, and by traversing the roads of France, Belgium, Germany, &c., gain a far more intimate knowledge of foreign life than is attainable by the ordinary railway tourist, it cannot be questioned that the bicycle is destined to play a very important part in the general education of the rising generation.

My object has been to show that bicycling is—firstly, of commercial importance; secondly, of real practical and professional service; and thirdly, as a pastime, has strong physical, moral, and intellectual recommendations. On these three broad grounds it is contended that it is a matter of national importance that it should receive full and fair consideration.

Within the Arctic Circle.

NEXT time you read the important announcement that one of Cook's parties has "entered the Arctic Circle at 10.25 this morning, all well," let me ask you to disillusion yourself in regard to the concomitants of such an adventure. Divest your mind of all association with eternal night, insurmountable glaciers, sledges, Lapp dogs, frozen noses, scurvy, lime-juice, and aurora borealis, and just think instead of a beautiful saloon on board a well appointed steamer, crimson velvet cushions, stained glass windows, table linen as clean as driven snow, excellent soup, salmon, &c., with the most delicious Hamburg "delicatessen," and you need no longer wonder that "all are well."

We are not Cook's tourists, and we breathe a less unromantic atmosphere than those gentlemen with

strong cockney accents usually do on their excursions. We think and speak of the heroes of the past, and gaze upon the evidences of their wondrous exploits. Just now we, too, entered the Arctic Circle, and there before us is the great Hestmand, the horseman whom Odin turned to stone as he swam through the ocean after the female Jutul, the giantess, who was escaping from him. You don't know the tale? Then I will tell it to you, as a charming young Norwegian lady (who has since gone ashore) told it to me yesterday.

The Jutul, or giantess, was standing on one of the islands, rolling paste, when this Jutul came up on horseback to molest her. You may fancy what a monster he was: as he and his horse stand petrified in the ocean to-day, with his great cloak sweeping back over his horse's tail, he is just 1,515 feet high! Well, the poor Jutul did not know what to do for terror. She seized her baking-table and rolling-pin, and sprang into the sea, swimming with all her might towards the south. The monster was taken aback—the more so as he saw her seven sisters on a neighbouring island threatening him if he ventured to follow her. He had already sprung with his horse into the sea, and, following the swim-away with his eyes, he saw her cross the Torghatten, a great rock, just like our Ailsa Craig, about eight hundred feet high, and down she plunged once more into the ocean. The baffled Jutul was so enraged that he seized a great stone about sixty feet in diameter, and watched for her re-appearance. This took place on an island a long way south of Torghatten. I forget the name of the island, but if you want to know it write to Cox, who is sure to know all about it—Cox, the Aryan mythologist. Well, the poor giantess had no sooner landed than the Jutul, looking round with a horrid grin at the seven sisters, hurled the stone after her. He threw it with such force that it went right through Torghatten, and struck the poor girl just as she was going to make another plunge to get out of the brute's way. Her table and rolling-pin flew out of her hand, and she was precipitated into the sea and drowned. Her seven sisters rent the air with their cries; and, in order to put an end to their sufferings and to the career of the cruel Jutul, Odin turned them all into stone as they stood.

You don't believe it? Well, I'm not surprised at it. It doesn't tally with your 'ism. You believe things that are far more incredible. Besides, how will you get over this? The Hestmand is here, just as he was petrified. So are the seven sisters, and very beautiful they look. And on the island farther south the identical baking-table and rolling-pin are still to be seen. But, most wonderful of all, there stands Torghatten, with the hole through it, 400 feet over the sea level. At one end it is 64 feet in diameter, in the middle 240 feet, and at the farther end, where you can see the light shining through, it is 200 feet; and the tunnel made by the stone is just 520 feet long. Right through the island runs the Arctic Circle, which was visible when the great event happened which I have narrated, and (perhaps this may convince you) which you will still find laid down in every map and chart in Christendom.

If you should feel at all puzzled to understand

these marvels, let me tell you that I am in fairyland, where there is no night, and where the sun rises before it has set. You don't believe that either? Well, let me tell you what I saw last night. It was about eleven o'clock, and broad daylight, when I happened to turn my eyes to the region of sunset. Whilst overhead and all around there was a grey cloudy sky, I saw in the west a long vista of clouds of bright golden hue.

I could not make out at first whether the sun had set or not, so I went and asked the captain. At first he said it was rising; but when I showed him that it was an hour before midnight, he admitted that he must be mistaken, and left me to solve the difficulty.

I watched the scene for an hour and a half; and in order to give you some idea of what I saw, I will try to transfer the sky to the Irish Sea, as we see it from Bidston Hill on a clear summer evening. There to the left is the Welsh Coast, with the great Ormes Head reaching out into the sea; to the right of it is the horizon, the sea-line, and to the right of that the Lancashire shore; whilst between the sea and around us is Cheshire, with Liverpool visible when we turn round. Now look at the horizon, and see the long perspective of clouds stretching across it, over the sea. The upper and lower limits of the clouds are fringed with gold, and the spaces between them are of an exquisite greenish-yellow colour.

But see: the black lines of the clouds themselves are becoming illuminated, until the whole is a blaze of golden light. Surely the sun must be setting there. But where is he? Look to the left. There, near the Ormes Head is another vista of dark clouds, fringed with the brightest orange—line after line, stratum after stratum—one brighter than another. Ah! the sun must be behind those. But no! Look a little to the right—there, just over Leasowe Lighthouse. Why, the sun must be rising! It is positively a lovely morning sky—grey clouds, a yellowish-blue sky: all the well-known hues of "the unfolding morn!"

And yet the sun cannot have set, for it is not yet midnight, and the evening clouds are blazing up afresh. I expect at every instant to see the golden orb itself dip down into the ocean. The great Ormes Head is perfectly black as it stands out before the apparently descending sun, whilst a blaze of yellow and of orange light up the clouds, the sky, the hill-tops, and the sea itself. And it would seem as though this wondrous sunset-rise was to last for ever.

The strain upon the mind is too great. Turn round and look at Birkenhead and Liverpool. There they lie, in broad daylight, the light of a cool, grey April day, with every building and every factory clearly discernible. And yet look at your watch. It now marks half an hour after midnight.

One more glance at the sea, to ascertain what change has occurred there. The golden glory, the deep orange lines fringing the dark grey clouds, the promised appearance of the blazing orb itself, always expected in its downward course, but never visible; and close by the clear indications of its rising, the greenish-yellow tint of the morning, and the cold grey clouds above. All are there as before, but not

even a ray to indicate the whereabouts of the glorious orb itself.

Now, for the Ormes Head and for tame Cheshire and Lancashire, substitute Arran, and Bute, and Skye, with one or two of the highland lochs; but leave the sky in all its grandeur—here the setting sun, concealed by the long vista of cloud-streaks illumined with golden orange; there the impending sunrise, with all the lovely hues of morning—and you will be able to form some slight conception of this fairyland through which we are journeying, of an Arctic summer midnight.

The Favourite Hound.

"I REMEMBER," said my host, as he lit his pipe, "a most romantic legend with regard to that monastery in the woods which you saw this morning; and if you care to listen while you smoke that cigar, I will relate it as exactly as I can recollect it after all these years."

He was a pleasant, good-natured fellow, with a great affection for the sound of his own voice, which was a full, round, rather musical one; and in telling a story he dwelt long on his words, pausing between his sentences, and lingering over them with thorough enjoyment.

I was lazy, after a day spent in bear-hunting with a party of Russian gentlemen living in the neighbourhood; and, not caring about the trouble of talking myself, I drew a little nearer to the glowing log, and signified my readiness to become an attentive auditor.

He began with a preliminary cough, after settling himself more comfortably in his chair:—

It was in the days when serfdom was not a thing of the past, that there lived, not far from here, a Russian nobleman, by name Nicholas Golovski. He was a stern and silent man, and it was said that he had never smiled since the death of a beautiful girl who was to have been his wife. However that may be, he was a gloomy man, hard in his dealings with his servants, and showing affection for no one, save for a peasant who had served him faithfully since they were both children, and for a noble hound that was always by his side. This hound had been a gift from the lady who died, and for this reason he valued it so highly. Most of his time was spent in hunting in that large pine forest, in the outskirts of which stands the monastery that attracted your attention.

The servant I spoke of was called Peter, and was a fine, handsome fellow, broad-shouldered and strong, and devoted to his master, who scarcely ever repaid him for his fidelity by other than harsh looks and words, which Peter never thought of resenting, though he remembered a time when Nicholas Golovski was very different—when he was courteous to all men, even to his slaves.

One day it happened that Golovski entered the forest in the hope of running to earth a bear, which had been seen the previous night. He was accompanied, as usual, by numerous attendants, and provided with dogs; Peter riding by his side, and his faithful hound at his heels. The bear was discovered

and slain, and all were turning homewards when the master missed his dog. He whistled, expecting to see it come bounding to his side, but there was no response, though he called it by name again and again.

"We must go back," he said; "he may have been injured by the bear, and be unable to follow."

So, calling and whistling, they retraced their steps, going over again every part of the forest where they had been, but without discovering anything to show what had become of the favourite hound.

"Separate, then," said Golovski. "Disperse yourselves in all directions until you find him. You, Peter, remain with me, and we will look for him together."

They wandered about the wood till nightfall, and then, still unsuccessful, the peasants returned to their homes—the nobleman, followed by Peter, to his.

He rose early, and returned to the scene of the previous day's sport, a deeper cloud than usual on his brow. But it was all to no purpose. His calls were unheard; and though he wandered hither and thither till once more darkness closed in, the search was fruitless as before.

The next day he offered a large reward to any one who should bring the dog back to him; but even this had no result. All the peasants from the neighbourhood turned out to join the search, and every part of that immense forest was explored, but in vain. They gave it up at last, saying that the animal had been spirited away, for the forest was haunted. Then master and slave wandered in the woods alone for days, for Golovski swore he would not give it up; until one day, as they rode wearily along, towards sunset, an old man suddenly appeared before them, planting himself right in the path.

This strange figure was so repulsive to view that Golovski involuntarily shrank back on his saddle, while both horses shied violently, and required a great deal of determination on the part of their riders to keep them from starting off at a gallop. The old man's back was bent; his nose and chin nearly met over his toothless mouth. Long, unkempt, grizzled hair hung in thin locks over his shoulders, while a matted beard of the same colour fell over his chest, and from under his shaggy eyebrows gleamed a pair of eyes whose fiery glances seemed to pierce to the very hearts of those who looked at him.

Here I ventured mildly to remonstrate.

"I say, isn't that rather strong?"

"Did I say the story was true?" asked my host, with undisturbed equanimity. "It is only a legend, as I mentioned before I began."

"Pardon," I answered; "go on."

"What do you want, old man?" asked Nicholas Golovski.

"I can bring you what you seek," said the old man in a hollow voice, tremulous with age.

"You can!" cried the nobleman, in a passion. "You have dared to keep him all this time?"

"I have him not, but I know where he is. He is enchanted, and has run for many miles; but I can call him back for you if you will pay me what I ask."

Golovski drew forth his heavy purse.

"This contains the sum I offered as a reward. It is yours when I see my dog again."

A harsh, discordant laugh followed this remark.

"I want no silver nor gold, young man. I want your servant. Give him to me, and you shall have your desire."

"Come away, master," urged Peter, in a low tone.

"I fear his eye. He is a magician."

But his words were unheeded, save by the old man.

"He is right, I am a magician. But I have grown old, and I want back my youth and strength, which I can only gain by the life of such a man as I would be."

"Will nothing but this suffice?" asked Golovski.

"Nothing."

He remained in gloomy thought for some minutes; and Peter, watching him with dread, saw a look of determination gathering on his face.

He sprang to the ground, and fell on his knee.

"Master," he cried, imploringly, "I have served you faithfully since we were children. Have I not thought more of you than of myself, or of any one in the world? I would give my life for yours, if need were. But for a dog!—can you give me up to death for a mere brute?"

His master did not speak, and there was no sign that he was moved by Peter's words.

"Have pity," said the poor fellow, entreatingly. "Look at me—think of the times we have been together—"

"Be silent," was the harsh reply. "I agree, old man. Take him, and restore me my hound."

Peter started to his feet, and gave his master a look of amazement and reproach, then turned to flee; but the wizard's iron hand was on his arm, and he was powerless. He folded his arms proudly as he was led away.

"Farewell, Nicholas Golovski," said he. "The curse of Heaven will be on you for such base ingratitude."

As the couple disappeared, there was a rustling among the brushwood, and his faithful dog bounded to him.

He dismounted and patted it, but felt no pleasure at its return.

"Come back," he called. "Peter, come back!"

And, springing to the saddle again, he dashed off in pursuit; but the couple had disappeared.

Slowly he rode homewards, followed by his recovered favourite.

He entered the house, already feeling full of remorse for his conduct, but trying to forget Peter, and rejoice that his dog was once more beside him. Turning to caress it, he found it stretched lifeless at his feet. He had sacrificed his faithful attendant, stained his honour, and planted the seeds of undying remorse in his heart, for nothing! As he looked upon the body of his dead favourite, he realized this, and felt that in truth the curse of heaven was upon him.

It was late, and he went to his couch, hoping to forget his troubles in sleep; but was haunted by hideous dreams, and rose unrefreshed. However, he determined to go about the affairs of the day as

usual. What was his surprise on descending to find no servants there to attend on him, no meal prepared, and the house empty of all save himself. He called, but in vain; and, wondering what had happened to attract them all, he sallied out in search of them.

He soon saw that it was no outward event which had drawn all his slaves away, but that they shunned and feared him. Every one he approached fled with looks of horror and aversion.

He then resolved to expiate his sin by some great work, and built that monastery to the memory of Peter; but even this could not regain for him the position he had lost, silence the reproaches of conscience, nor bring him back the esteem and respect of his neighbours. Some of the peasants, indeed, served him, for high wages; but he felt always that, while they ministered to him, he was the object of their detestation; and to get away from the eyes of men, he took to wandering in the pine forest again, in that part where he had made the fatal mistake.

His eyes ever on the ground, he was there one evening as the sun was low in the sky, when a harsh, mocking laugh made him look up, to see a man standing in his path—tall, erect, and powerful. There was nothing familiar to him save the eyes; but when he met their glance he recognized the wizard.

"Wretch!" he cried out; "you have ruined me, and you shall die for it."

He snatched his sword from its sheath, and the wild birds in the trees were scared by the clash of weapons. They soon ceased; and a woodcutter coming that way in the morning found Nicholas Golovski dead on the spot where he had regained his favourite hound.

The Fishing Season.

GOOD takes of fish are recorded as having been made lately; but there is no doubt the presence of thunder in the atmosphere is a great check on the prospects of sport. Mr. Wheeldon and three friends have paid a visit, through the kindness of Colonel Goodlake, to the Denham fishery, and have had a capital day's sport, the result being fourteen jack—the largest 9 lbs.—40 lbs. of roach and dace, and three trout. The jack are described as being on the banks of the water like alligators, 14 lbs. and 16 lbs. each. In the Thames, at Windsor, "Nottingham George" has been doing well with the barbel, and in legering taken several good trout. The anglers at Laleham and Penton Hook have been doing remarkably well. In one instance, in two days, a take is recorded of 47 lbs. of roach and dace. Two other rodsters in the day made a basket of 46 lbs. of bream, one barbel, and a chub. Messrs. E. Frost and Tomkins, at Monkey Island, in two days, caught 80 lbs. weight of chub, dace, and roach with the fly and cheese paste, and in legering a trout of 2½ lbs. The fish were all caught in the broiling sun, as they would not bite in the morning or evening. The largest chub weighed 4½ lbs., and three of the best roach 3 lbs. 4 oz. The sportive little gudgeon, which are great favourites with the lady anglers, have been feeding at Sheperton, two of the anglers in two hours and a half

taking ten dozen, and, in addition, seven brace of perch. At the famous deep at Walton, John Rosewell has taken sixteen bream and a roach of 1½ lb. The roach in this neighbourhood are running remarkably fine, as there are several instances of 1½ lb. fish being caught, and the bream have been up to 5 lbs. each. A small trout of 1½ lb. has been taken at Sunbury by Mr. Jones, but put back again. At Hampton Court, Thomas Wheeler, in two days, has caught twenty-one barbel; and the best day of roach and dace fishing has been nine dozen, with the addition of four barbel. Tagg's Island fishery, in this neighbourhood, has been giving sport to the anglers. One of the rodsters from the banks took two barbel, weighing respectively 4 lbs. and 2 lbs., a bream of 3 lbs., and 2 lbs. of smaller fish. At Kingston the roach and dace are being taken in respectable quantities, supplemented with from three to eight bream. One of the fishermen records a take of nineteen barbel. Angling in the tidal waters is on the improvement, the roach and dace increasing in number and size, and the barbel scoring with them about three in the day.

Physiological Action of Malt Liquors.

MR. J. J. COLEMAN, having lately been a sufferer from a serious illness, a prominent symptom of which was inability to digest food, was ordered to take a malt extract. The usual dose—a wineglassful twice or thrice a day—was taken, with the result that food which had hitherto escaped undigested was assimilated, and the power of producing animal heat and storing up fat was increased. Other persons—thin, cold, or aged—were induced to become the subjects of experiment, and reported that it was more sustaining than most alcoholic liquors.

Those facts led Mr. Coleman to make an extended series of experiments, which he has embodied in a paper read before the Glasgow Philosophical Society, and which is abstracted in the *Chemist and Druggist* of May 15. Analysis of the extract proved that, in composition, it closely resembled other malt liquors, differing chiefly by yielding a rather larger per centage of extract. In appearance it resembles porter. An explanation of the sensation of being lifted from a feeling of semi-starvation to the condition of being effectually warmed and nourished, seemed to be required. The four per cent. of alcohol in the extract, and other malt liquors, could not explain its permanent heating effects.

The scientific experiments of Drs. Richardson and Edward Smith prove that an equal quantity of sugar has a more permanent power of warming, and popular experience confirms their statements. Now, the diastase contained in malt is able to convert the starch of four or five times its weight of barley into soluble substances. Starch forms a very large proportion of our daily food, and it seemed possible that, by rendering this more soluble, Hoff's malt extract might produce the effects which had been experienced. Experiments were, therefore, instituted to decide the question; and it was conclusively proved that all malt liquors exert a more or less powerful solvent action on bread and other starchy foods, and that Hoff's liquid possesses

four times the power of Burton ale, and half as much again as London porter. This action is so great as fully to account for the good effects observed to follow their use.—*British Medical Journal*.

An Ancient Irish Monument.

ONE of the most interesting of the ancient monuments of Ireland, the Grinian of Alleach, in the County Donegal, which stands on the top of a hill 800 feet high, on the property of Lord Templetown, has just been rescued from destruction by the efforts of Dr. W. Bernard, of Derry. It is a circular fort, which was originally built in pagan times, and formed part at a later period of a regal residence rivalling the famous palace of "Tara of the Kings." It commands an extensive prospect, extending on one side over Lough Foyle, and over Lough Swilley on the other.

In the year 1101, Murtough O'Brien demolished it, and ordered his men to take away one stone of the building in every empty sack which they had, and with them to head a parapet built at the top of his palace, which occupied the site of the present Cathedral of Limerick. Some other stones were taken away in recent times to build the parapet of a bridge in the vicinity of the ruin; but Dr. Bernard believes that no other stones were taken for building purposes.

In the reconstruction of the fort only the fallen stones were used, except 700 or 800, which were picked up about the hill, and a coping of masonry. It is perfectly circular, and stands about twenty feet high, of conical shape, with massive walls built without mortar, by wedging the larger stones together with small ones. Inside it is about seventy feet wide, having three platforms rising above each other, approached by steps, and is crowned by a parapet. There is but one entrance, which looks eastward; and there are doorways inside, which seem to lead to subterranean passages, but they have not been explored.

The idea of preserving the ruin, which was in a very neglected state, and likely soon to lose all trace of its original character, occurred to Dr. Bernard about four years ago; and it is a remarkable fact that the people, when appealed to for help to restore it, and informed of the antiquarian interest attached to it, cheerfully responded, and gave their time and labour to promote the work without receiving any payment.

Dr. Bernard pays a high tribute to their zeal and patience, observing that if they had been hired workmen they would hardly have shown as much obedience to their employers. He could not, in fact, have obtained such services for hire, for labour was not to be had.

In the course of the excavations which were carried on, a number of relics were turned up, which place the antiquity of the place beyond question. It is recorded that Grinian existed 1,700 years before the Christian era, and it is marked on Ptolemy's map in the second century, which was a copy of a much older map found in Alexandria.

Among the relics were bones and teeth, defaced coins, the button and the socket of a plough, round

stones with holes in the centre, war clubs, sling stones, a stone found in ashes marked into squares, another of dark colour shaped like a heart, another with fluted columns, and a polished cone with flat base. Working under a heap of rubbish, the labourers came upon one of the platforms 30 ft. long, 3 ft. wide, and 5 ft. from the ground, and in the wall, which had almost crumbled away, four steps were found, which it was inferred led to another platform. There is a fort in the County Kerry, called Staigue Fort, which only differs in the platforms being a little longer.

The completion of the work of restoration was celebrated by an entertainment given at the spot by Dr. Bernard. Without the permission of Lord Templetown and his agent, Mr. Bower, the undertaking could not have been carried out, and they justly share the gratitude which is felt towards Dr. Bernard.

ARRIVALS AT MR. CHAS. JAMRACH'S.—One pair Arabian gazelles (*Gazella Arabica*), two racoons (*Procyon lotor*), two coatimundis (*Nasua nasica*), one pair emus (*Dromacus Novæ-Hollandiæ*), six flamingoes (*Phœnicapterus antiquorum*), one pair Bateleur eagles (*Helotarsus ecaudatus*), fifteen great eagle owls (*Bubo maximus*), forty grey parrots (*Psittacus erythacus*), twenty grey cardinals (*Paroaria cucullata*), fifteen Carolina parakeets (*Conurus Carolinensis*).

THE MOUNTAIN GOAT.—The mountain goat is one of the rarest large animals of the Rocky Mountains, and only inhabits the northern ranges. The Cascade ranges are said to be the southern limit of its range, though from its heavy coat and general appearance it probably migrates to the Arctic regions in summer; although, having hunted one season where the goats are said to range, not one was seen, nor any sign of them. The mountain goat is nearly white, with a long, hanging coat and beard. Its horns are like those of the female mountain sheep and domestic goat. Its legs are short and strong, and the flesh resembles mutton.

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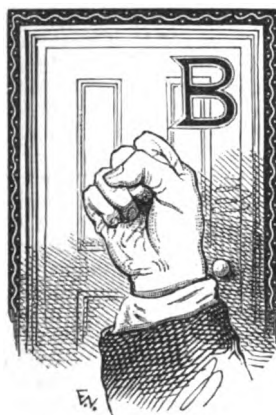
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CHAPTER XVI.—MATT MAKES A DISCOVERY.



ANNETT'S - rents harassed old Matt sorely in these days, so that people about Lincoln's-inn began to turn their heads and look after the shabbily-dressed old printer who passed them, to stop every now and then at a lamp-post, and then go on again, shaking his head like an anglicised mandarin; for the old man was much troubled about the state of affairs. At times he would be for making a confidant of Mr. Sterne, and asking his advice and guidance, but somehow there always seemed a certain amount of suspicion on either side, and Matt and the curate maintained a gap between them which neither attempted to cross. But the old man was after all not unhappy, for he was enjoying that supreme pleasure which fills the heart, making it swell almost painfully—that pleasure which never satiates, while it is like the seed of the parable cast into the ground, some may be blighted, some trampled down, but there are always certain grains which flourish and give to the sower a hundredfold of grain in return. Old Matt was enjoying the pleasure of doing good and helping a fellow-man in distress. It may be questioned whether the old man's path was ever easier or more brightly irradiated than during his connection with the Hardons. True, his income was of the very smallest; but then it is not the extent of a man's income that gives him pleasure in this life, but the secret of having all the possible enjoyment out of it. Some with wealth seek for this enjoyment after a wrong fashion, and find only bitterness, while in the homes of poverty joy often finds an abiding-place.

Septimus Hardon often wondered afterwards how they had managed to live in this time of trouble; but one way and another the days passed by. Now he would make a few shillings by his copying, then there was Lucy's work, while, in spite of remonstrances, old Matt persisted in enjoying his income after his own fashion, playing his little miserable farces to his own satisfaction, and then grinning to himself over the little bits of deceit. He never stopped, shrewd as he was, to ask himself whether his subterfuges were not of the most transparent; they gained him his end, and he considered that it was a novel and a neat way of managing the matter, when a hint at lending money would have given offence.

One day succeeded another, with the family

struggling on, Mrs. Septimus helping Lucy when she could, while, as for Septimus, the most satisfactory work he obtained was that of copying sermons out for Mr. Sterne; though, strange as it may seem, that gentleman never once used Septimus Hardon's clear, unblurred transcript, but put it away week after week, sighing that his income was not greater.

Septimus had now given up all hope of hearing from his father, and, resigned somewhat to his fate, he bent over his writing-table trying to make up by perseverance what he wanted in ability—a capital plan, and one that has succeeded where talent has made a miserable failure, as old Æsop knew hundreds of years ago. As for asking his uncle for aid, such a thought never crossed Septimus Hardon's mind; and perhaps it was well, for it spared the poor, sensitive man the unpleasantness of a refusal.

One day, all in a hurry and bustle, up came old Matt, just at dinner-time, to find Mrs. Septimus making a sorry failure in her attempt to find an invalid's dinner in some bread and a long slice of cheese that a laundress would easily have seized by mistake, under the impression that it was "best yellow soap."

"There, just like me!" exclaimed the old man, with a hasty glance round the room; "just like me; but you won't mind, I know. I always drop in at meal-times. There, give us a kiss, my man. God bless you! 'What I dot for 'oo?' There's a pretty way to talk! Why, let's see; I think there's something here—down in here somewhere;" and the old man began to dive behind into one of his pockets. "To be sure, here it is!" he cried; "and if all the rich jam isn't coming through the paper! Here we are," he cried, bringing out of a little bag a small oval paste-dish, with a crimped edge, full of a very luscious treacly-looking preserve, one that, ten minutes before, had been danced over by the flies in the pastrycook's shop in the Lane.

Off went little Tom rejoicing, to prepare himself for the after-dinner wash by gumming his chubby face and hands with the jam.

"You won't mind, sir, and, ma'am, I hope?" said Matt, apologetically. "But I'm full of work, and haven't time to go home—my lodgings, you know; and if you wouldn't mind. I'm as hungry as a hunter—money-hunter, you know; and there's as nice a bit of roast veal and bacon, piping hot, in the Lane as ever I did see, and that's saying a good deal. Talk about the smell of it! there, you didn't look in at the shop door, or you'd never give a fellow such a cold-shouldery look, ma'am. Whatever you do, ma'am, lend me a couple of plates; I won't intrude long."

Mrs. Septimus hesitated, and glanced at her husband, who was making a feint of eating.

"There," cried old Matt, making a grimace, and glancing at Lucy, "I knew it would come to this; they're growing proud, and I may go. They might have put it off another day, and not showed it just when I feel so well and jolly, and could have enjoyed a bit of dinner, which aint often with me."

Septimus Hardon saw his wife's appealing glance, and peered about him in every direction, as if to avoid giving an answer; but on one side there was Tom, sticky and happy with the old man's bounty;

before him was his invalid wife, with her wretched face; again, there was Lucy working, and relieving hunger by occasional mouthfuls of the bread-and-cheese at her side; while, on turning his eyes in another direction, there stood Matt, just as he had stood on the day when he borrowed a shilling on their first encounter.

What was he to do? He had as much pride, or false pride, as most men, and he would gladly have been independent of old Matt's assistance; but there seemed no help for it, and once more in his life, humbled and mortified, he nodded to Mrs. Septimus; and the next moment old Matt stood irresolutely by the table, clattering a couple of plates together, to the great endangering of their safety, as he seemed to be turning them into a pair of earthenware cymbals.

"There, sir; don't, now," said Matt, earnestly. "Don't let's have any more pretence or nonsense about it; don't be put out because I'm doing this, sir. 'Taint that I don't respect you. I didn't get on the stilts, sir, when you helped me. I asked you for it, which is a thing I know you couldn't do; but when it's offered you free and humble-like, don't take on, sir, and fancy I respect you any the less. I sha'n't forget my place, sir, 'pon my soul I sha'n't, begging your pardon, ma'am, and Miss Lucy's; but, you see, I'm in earnest, and it worries me to see Mr. Hardon here put out, because—because—Well, you know," said Matt, with a twinkle in his eye, "because an old battered type of humanity like me wants to sit down and have a bit of dinner here, and it's all getting spoilt; best cut's gone, you know, I'm sure. I know I *am* shabby."

Septimus waved his hand deprecatingly.

"There, sir; there," continued Matt. "Don't be down; don't let the world see as there's no more fight in you. See what a son and daughter you've got. Why, God bless 'em, they're enough to make a man of a chap if he's ever so bad. Never say die, sir. I'm often in the downs, I am, you know; but then I say to the world, 'Come on, and let's have it out at once and done with it.' Let's take it like a dose of physic, and then have the sugar that's to come and take the taste out of one's mouth afterwards. Sure to be a bit of sugar to come some time, you know, sir; some gets more than others, but then there's always a share for you if you won't be soft enough to get your mouth out of taste and fancy it's bitter when it comes, and so not enjoy it. Lots do, you know, sir; while lots more, sir, think so much of their sugar of life, sir, that they spoil it, sir—foul it and damp it, and turn it into a muddy, sticky, dirty treacle, sir; and then, sir, loving nothing but pleasure—or sugar, as we call it—how they buzz about it like so many flies, till they are surfeited, and get their legs and wings fixed, and die miserably, sir. Sugar's no good, sir, unless you have a taste of bitter before it. You don't want to be having all pleasure, you know; it wouldn't do. Round the wheel of fortune, you know, sir; now down, now up, just as times go."

All these meant-to-be-philosophical remarks old Matt accompanied by a cymbal tune upon the two plates, while Septimus sat moody and silent.

"Now, you see, sir," said Matt, gently, "I know

what you feel—you don't like having such a battered old hulk about your place, and feel a bit offended at me for imposing upon your good-nature."

Septimus made a gesture of dissent.

"Well then, sir, we won't play with the matter. You don't like my having a bit of dinner here, and all that sort of thing; but don't you make no mistake, sir, I aint kicked about in a selfish world all these years without ketching the complaint. I was never vaccinated against selfishness, sir, so I've took it badly, I can tell you. You may look out, sir, for I've a long score chalked up against you, and you'll have it some day."

And then old Matt stuck his hat on very fiercely and shuffled out of the room, muttering and chuckling as he went down—

"Ho, ho, ho!—creditor! New position for me as have been in debt all my life!"

The old man soon returned after his fashion, bringing in a large portion of the veal and bacon from the cook-shop in the Lane; for the best cuts were not all gone. Then followed the old farce of what he called his chonometric complaint, from its always coming on just at meal-times; and helping himself to a slice of bread, in spite of all appeals, the old man took a sticky kiss from Tom and shuffled out of the room.

It was a sight worth seeing—the satisfaction of that grim old man, as he went chuckling down the creaking stairs, and out into the court. His was not the shape a painter would have chosen for the embodiment of gratitude; but there it was—even the battered, ill-used carcass of that old printer—a body misused by the hard world till he had grown careless of it himself, and misused it in his turn. Alone in the world, what had he to care for beyond a little present enjoyment? For, as to the future, it is to be feared that Mr. Sterne would have pronounced him as being beneath a dense black cloud. Twice was the old man stopped by lamp-posts, but he recollected himself and continued his route to where the open door of the cook-shop sent out a thick, kitcheny vapour, pleasant or the reverse, according to whose organs it assailed—to the well-fed perhaps disgusting, but to the poor and hungry an odour as of paradise. There upon the shining pewter dishes, that in the early morn had been such a dry metallic desert, were now displayed, in gravy-oozing majesty, what Matt looked upon as all the delicacies of the season. There were round of beef and brisket, boiled; roast leg, shoulder, and loin of mutton; roast beef, and the remains of the veal; while as to gravy—whence comes the gravy that meanders in streams over cook-shop joints, flooding the dishes, and making glad the hearts of the hungry?—there was gravy to an extent never known in private life, for the joints soaked in the tissue-renovating fluid.

Ah! that fat cook-shop-keeper, as he wielded his long-bladed, keen carver, and equitably and glibly sliced it through fat and lean, well-done, under-done, and brown, with a facility that made one think he had been apprenticed to a ham in the palmy days of Vauxhall—dealing with the porcine joint with similar intentions to those of the gold-beater with his morsel of the yellow ore. Ah! that fat, rosy-

facted man in the white cap and jacket had much to answer for in the way of tempting hungry sinners. Fat! he might well be fat, for was he not existing upon the very essences of the meats always beneath his nostrils, which must have inhaled sustaining wealth at every breath he drew, to the saving of both teeth and digestion?

But he did not tempt old Matt, who entered and asked for a "small German," for which he paid twopence, asking no questions regarding its composition, while it was delivered to him after the fashion that buns are presented to our old ursine friends at the "Zoo"—stuck at the end of a fork.

Old Matt turned his back stolidly upon the luxuries of the cook-shop, strolled into the big street, and began to nibble his small German, in company with the dusty, fluey slice of bread he brought out of his pocket. There was a parish pump there, with its swinging copper handle; and, regardless of medical reports, and chemical analyses, and cholera germs contained in the clear, sparkling fluid, old Matt had a hearty draught, and smacked his lips after, as if he enjoyed it—and doubtless he did. There was the prospect of a murky old inn down a gateway, and the busy throng of people passing him; but Matt noticed nothing, for his thoughts were upon matters in Bennett's-rents—though, for all that, he was enjoying his simple meal, which was eaten without a thought of the prime veal and bacon, or his sad complaint, which had now fled till next dinner-time, as, by way of amusement, he turned down Castle-street to witness the performance of a gentleman in tights and spangles—a gentleman evidently high in his profession, but blessed with a nose of the Whitechapel mould, black, greasy, tucked-under hair, confined by a blue ribbon, slightly oiled; a pimply face, and a body apparently furnished with gristle in the place of bones.

As Matt came up, the gentleman was balancing a peacock's feather upon the tip of his nose, to the accompaniment of a popular air performed by a partner upon drum and pan-pipes—the arrangement of the air apparently necessitating more muscular action with the arms than from the lungs; for though now and then a shrill and piercing note was heard from the pipes, it was not often, while the rumble of the beaten drum was incessant. The next performance was the balancing and twirling of a barrel on the acrobat's feet, he all that time lying down upon a cushion in a very uncomfortable, determination-of-the-blood-to-the-head position, what time the band, tucking his pipes inside his coat and setting his drum on end, came round the attentive circle, shaking the performer's greasy, private-life cap in the observers' faces, after the fashion of zealous deacons in churches of high proclivities—save that in this case the cap was of very common cloth, while in the other the little bags would probably be of red velvet, lined with white satin.

The band stopped opposite old Matt, who had loudly applauded the performance, for he had felt so at peace with the world at large, that he was in the humour to be pleased with any and everything. So the old man thrust a willing hand into his pocket, and the band smiled expectant; but the

next moment Matt's face turned very serious, and with the loud taunt of the band ringing in his ears, he shuffled down Castle- and into Cursitor-street, in the direction of the office where he had a job; far more piercing than the shrillest note of the pipes, and more impressive than the heaviest bang of the drum, came the words of the musician (?)—

"Well, if I hadn't ha' had a brown I'd ha' said so, and not made believe."

For the old printer's pocket did not contain a coin of any description, the last two having been expended for his simple meal; so hurrying along the old fellow looked very serious for quite fifty yards; then he began to whistle; then he stopped at a lamp-post, but wrenched himself away again directly, and hurried down Fetter-lane, for the clocks were striking two, and his dinner-hour was over. But before turning into Typeland Matt entered into one of those well-known places of business with swinging doors, and shuffling up to the pewter-covered counter, asked for a pint of porter on trust.

And went away wiping his mouth upon the back of his hand, of course? Nothing of the kind; for the landlord smiled pleasantly, shook his head, and declared that whenever he gave trust he lost a customer. So old Matt slinked away, and soon came to another swing-door, when, passing through, a far different odour saluted his nostrils—an odour commingled of steam, oil, treacle, glue, turpentine, stale breath, fresh paint, wet paper, and gas; where there was a continual noise of hissing and rumbling of wheels, rattling of straps and bands, with a constant vibration of the great building, which heavily brooded over the reeking mass, as if hatching earthquakes.

Up a staircase, whose walls shone with the marks of inky and oily hands, past dirty-faced boys in paper caps and aprons, whose shirt sleeves were rolled high above their elbows; past a window, a glance through which showed mighty engine and machine rushing off their work in never-tiring mode, wheels spinning, cylinders slowly revolving, with white sheets of paper running in, printed sheets running out, to be piled in stacks; here the portion of a magazine whose pages should rivet the attention of some fair reader; there the newspaper, to be spread in thousands through the length and breadth of the land; while again, close at hand, lumbered the heavy press to turn off by hand copies of the broad-margined, large-typed, thick-papered Chancery bill, whose legible words should nearly drive some weary disputant mad, although but a short time before its well-paid pages and open work had made glad the heart of a round-shouldered compositor—sower of the dragons' teeth of knowledge. Up still went old Matt Space—past boys bearing proof-sheets—boys who read copy in a sing-song, nasal, pointless twang to keen-eyed readers, ready to give angry stabs at ill-spelt words, to stick their pens through eyeless i's, and condemn the mutilated letters to the melting-pot; past pressmen, toiling down, Benjamin Franklin-like, with heavy forms of type; up, up, till he reached the top storey, where, beneath rows of skylights, men formed themselves into the hotbeds that generated disease, as they toiled on day after day at the cases of type, before

a pair of which old Matt posted himself, took a pinch of snuff, and then prepared for work.

In a few more minutes he was hard at his task, picking up letter by letter the component parts of the words spoken the day before at a public meeting, where an orator discoursed at length upon the financial greatness of this our country, after which he dived into statistics; so that the old compositor was soon realizing the facts, and revelling in sums of money eight figures in length, and that, too, without a single penny in his pocket.

Click, click; click, click; letter after letter passing into the metal composing-sticks; thirty men busily engaged, and not a word spoken beyond the occasional muttering whisper of the worker, who sought to impress his MS. more fully upon his mind by reading it aloud; while old Matt, poring over his copy by the aid of a pair of horn spectacles, now and then paused for a stimulator from the snuff loose by accident in his coat-pocket hanging from a nail in the wall—snuff that had to be hunted into corners and brought forth in pinches, the greater proportion of which consisted of flue and crumbs.

"Pound £, nine, comma; eight, four, three, comma; six, four, two," muttered the old man, arranging the figures. "Ah, bless my soul! now, what could I do with nine—nearly ten millions of money? And that sum's nothing at all. Poverty? Pooh! all humbug. There isn't such a thing; it's all a mistake. Somebody's got more than his share, and made things crooked."

Old Matt finished his task, and, on applying to the overseer for a fresh supply, he was set to correct a slip proof, when, taking the long column of type from which it had been printed, the old man was soon busy at work once more, correcting a misspelt word in this paragraph, removing a broken letter in that, and all the while muttering to himself, to the great amusement of the other men. But all at once he stopped short and stared at his work, looked eagerly round the office, as if to assure himself that all was real, and then devoured the words before him. Then he went on with his work in a flurried, nervous way, dropping words, misplacing letters, scattering type upon the floor, and making his fellow-workmen look up with wonder—attentions that made the old man more nervous and fidgety; until, as his nervousness increased, so did his task become more difficult of completion, the perspiration standing upon his forehead, and the expression of his face growing pitiful in the extreme.

But it was complete at last, though, through anxiety, old Matt had been twice as long as he would have been in an ordinary way; and then secretly tearing off a portion of the proof, he slipped it into his pocket, made an excuse to the overseer that he was unwell, and hurried into the street, where he jostled first one, and now another; now walking in the road, now upon the pavement, but all the while with one hand clasping tightly a scrap of paper he held in his pocket. As to what was going on around him he seemed so utterly oblivious that twice over he was nearly knocked down by passing vehicles. Again and again he would have stopped, but for the busy throng constantly hurrying along the street; and for the time being the old man

strongly resembled a cork tossed about in some busy, eddying stream; but he had evidently some object in view, for he kept pressing on in one particular direction, and his lips were incessantly in motion, forming words that savoured continually of that much-sought-for object—money.

CHAPTER XVII.—ANOTHER VISITOR FROM TOWN.

HOW ever great the shock of his night's adventure may have been to his system, Dr. Hardon, beyond missing his attentions to a few patients, displayed very little of it to the world at large comprised in Somesham and its neighbourhood. There were certainly two or three discolourations about his face, caused by the playful taps of the burglar's life-preserver, but they very soon disappeared. The doctor's greatest grievance was the loss of his numerous articles of jewelry, though even upon that subject he talked lightly and affably to his patients, evidently having a soul above the loss of such trifles, and people thought more of him than ever. The police had certainly been upon what waiter Charles of the County Arms called the "tract" of the burglars, but only discovered that they had entered the house by opening a window and stepping in; that they had taken all the plate; that three heavy-featured men came from London by the down mail on the night of the robbery, arriving at Somesham at half-past ten; and the porter thought he gave tickets to three stoutish men who went by the up mail at 2.30; when the police-sergeant came to the conclusion that it was a pre-arranged affair, and people talked about it for a few days, till they had something else to take their attention.

Doctor Hardon, portly and comfortable-looking, sat reading the evening paper just delivered from the stationer. No one to have seen him could have imagined that care had ever sat for a moment upon his ample forehead; and though, taking into consideration the incidents of the past few weeks, it might have been expected that he would look anxious and worn, on the contrary, he seemed greatly at ease within himself, and turned and rustled his newspaper importantly, refreshing himself from time to time with a sip of port from the glass at his elbow.

"I declare!" he exclaimed, suddenly throwing down the paper; "it's abominable—it's disgusting."

"What is?" said Mrs. Hardon, roused from the thoughtful mood into which she seemed to have fallen.

"Why, to have the privacy of one's life dragged into publicity in this way. The matter ought to have been hushed up."

"But what do you mean?" said Mrs. Hardon. "Is it anything about—"

"Yes, of course it is!" cried the doctor, savagely. "They've got it in the London papers, condensed from the *County Press*—a filthy penny rag. Just look here—made into a sensation paragraph."

"EATEN OF RATS.—A shocking discovery was made at Somesham on Monday last. A rather eccentric gentleman, named Hardon, residing entirely alone at a short distance from the town, was found in bed with his lower extremities horribly

mutilated by the rats which infest the place. The medical evidence at the inquest showed that death had probably taken place some eight-and-forty hours before the body was discovered; while the bottle of laudanum and tea spoon at the bedside pointed to an end which the *post-mortem* examination proved to have been the case—an overdose of the subtle extract having evidently been the cause of death. The deceased was without servants; for, in consequence of a burglary committed at the house shortly before this discovery, his housekeeper had left him, and her place remained unsupplied. As may be supposed, this tragic affair, following so closely upon the burglary, has caused intense excitement throughout the neighbourhood.

"Isn't it disgusting?" exclaimed the doctor, after a few moments' pause; while during the reading he had not displayed the slightest emotion, but read the paragraph from beginning to end without faltering.

Receiving no answer, he looked up, to see Mrs. Hardon sitting staring at him with a horrified aspect, while her fingers were stopping her ears.

"Oh, Tom!" she gasped at last, "haven't we had enough of that horrid affair lately without bringing it up again? I shall be glad when it's all over, and we begin to look upon it as a thing of the past. I declare I shall never like to use any of the money; I shall fancy a curse hangs to it. But do you think Septimus is dead?"

"Of course I do," said the doctor; "and if he is not, what does it matter?"

"Nothing at all, I suppose," replied Mrs. Hardon; "but really, Tom, it came upon me like a thunder-clap. Was that what poor Octavius sent to you about—to tell you that? I often thought there must be some reason for his long-continued obstinacy. What did he say to you about it?"

"Don't ask questions," said the doctor, abruptly. "It is enough for you to know that it is so, and that the money comes at a time when we want it badly."

"Then we have no business to have been wanting it badly," exclaimed Mrs. Hardon; "and I shall make it my business to go to Keening's one of these days, and ask them the state of your affairs."

"Yes, you had better!" snarled the doctor, displaying a bright speck of the gold setting of his teeth.

"But such a saint as poor Lavinia always seemed!" said Mrs. Hardon. "I should never have thought it of her; and if it was not that the poor thing is dead and gone, I should have called it quite disgraceful. But there, we can't afford to talk about such matters, I'm sure." And she began to rock herself to and fro in her chair, and to sob, "Oh, Tom! you drove that poor girl away—you did. She would never have left if—"

"Hold your tongue!" cried the doctor, fiercely.

"But you did, Tom; and I shall never forget her look that day I met her in the street—it went like a knife to my heart."

Mrs. Hardon sat crying silently for some time, while the doctor savagely rustled his paper, but all the while reading not a word, for his lips moved, and he talked fiercely to himself.

"There!" cried Mrs. Hardon, at last, "I won't take on, for it seems of no use; and whether she or I live or die, don't seem to matter to you, Tom. And now I want to know about Octavius's property. How much is it, and are you certain that there was no will?"

"I've told you there was none, ten times over," said the doctor; "and now wait till the funeral's over, for I won't be bothered."

"But, Tom," said Mrs. Hardon, "I want to know what is the extent—what it is really worth, and how much you owe."

"Never mind," said the doctor.

"But I have a right to know," cried Mrs. Hardon.

"There, I don't know myself," said the doctor.

"Then perhaps your solicitors do," said Mrs. Hardon; "and I shall, as I have often threatened, ask them."

"And much good it will do you," muttered the doctor; but, not liking to run the risk of any exposure of his present differences with his wife, he compromised. "Well," he said, "what is it you wish to know?"

"Why, I told you," said Mrs. Hardon—"what Octavius's property is worth, and whether you are quite sure that Septimus—"

"You are wanted, sir, if you please," said the maid, appearing at the door.

"Who is it?" said the doctor, testily.

For this was an hour when he objected to being disturbed.

"Wouldn't give any name, sir," replied the girl.

"Send him round to the surgery," said the doctor.

"Please, sir, he's in the front passage, and he said he didn't want the surgery."

"What sort of a man is it?" said the doctor.

"Looks like a poor man, sir," said the girl.

"How many times have you been told not to leave strangers in the passage?" exclaimed Mrs. Hardon, angrily. "There'll be another coat gone directly. Go and stay with him till your master comes."

The maid disappeared, giving the door so loud a shut that it sounded almost like a bang, when the doctor began to complain of fatigue and being worn out, and Mrs. Hardon, who wished to propitiate, offered to go.

"Do, please, my love," murmured the doctor, in the most gentle of tones—the professional.

Mrs. Hardon slightly drew down the corners of her mouth in a contemptuous grimace as she left the room, but returned in a few minutes, looking pale and scared; and then she carefully closed the door after her.

"It's quite taken my breath away!" exclaimed Mrs. Hardon. "He frightened me. What made you tell me that Septimus was dead?"

"Well, isn't he?" said the doctor, shuffling hastily round in his chair.

"Dead!" exclaimed Mrs. Hardon. "If he is, it's his ghost that has come down, that's all."

"Come down?" cried the doctor, turning of a dirty pallid hue.

"And he's walked all the way from London. And you never saw such a poor, deplorable-looking object

in your life. He looks twenty years older, that he does."

"What does he want?" cried the doctor, panting in spite of his efforts to keep down his emotion.

"Says he's come down to see his father, and to attend to his affairs."

"Well, tell him to go to Keening's. I won't see him—I won't see him. My nerves won't bear it; they have not recovered from the last shock yet, let alone that horrible night of the robbery."

"But you'd better see him," said Mrs. Hardon, whose woman's heart was touched by her visitor's aspect.

"No, no; I can't—I can't bear it, and it's better that I should not."

And as he spoke there was no dissimulation in the doctor's words or mien: he was undoubtedly very much moved.

"But you must see him; and, besides, it will seem so strange if it's known in the town that you sent him away like that."

"Well—er—well—perhaps I had better," said the doctor. "Where is he? I'll go to him, or—no, let him come in here; but put away the wine first."

Mrs. Hardon took no notice of the last remark, but went out, and returned directly with Septimus Hardon, footsore, dusty, and travel-stained.

"Good evening, Mr. Septimus," said the doctor, in the tone of voice he had heard so often from his patients; and as he spoke he slightly bent forward, but lay back again directly in his chair without offering his visitor a seat. "Good evening, Mr. Septimus—I suppose we must say Hardon?"

"If you please, uncle," said Septimus, somewhat startled at his strange reception—a reception more chilling even than in his diffidence he had anticipated.

"Sit down, Septimus, you look tired," said Mrs. Hardon, pouring out a glass of wine for the visitor, who drank it with avidity; for he was faint and agitated, feeling somewhat like the Prodigal, though this was no prodigal's welcome.

"How do you find business, Mr. Septimus?" said the doctor, perspiring freely, but now speaking calmly and slowly.

"Bad—bad," said Septimus. "I have lost all, and been put to great shifts; while my poor wife is a confirmed invalid."

"Dear me, dear me," said the doctor, blandly, "how sad! I might perhaps be able to give her advice. I suppose she could not call at my surgery any morning before ten?"

"She always was delicate," put in Mrs. Hardon, hastily, for she was annoyed at her husband's behaviour; while something kept, as it were, whispering to her, "He is from London, and may know something of my poor girl."

There was a dead silence then for some few minutes, which the doctor broke.

"I—er—er—I—er—I think you have hardly come on a visit of ceremony," he said; "you wished to see me?"

And after coughing away something which seemed to form in his throat, he spoke in his most unguent tones—in the voice he kept for married ladies upon particular occasions.

"I came down," said Septimus, in a broken voice, "upon seeing my poor father's death. It was shown to me—by a friend—newspaper—torn scrap—I have walked down—weak—and ill."

Mrs. Hardon uttered an exclamation, for Septimus had risen as he spoke, and stood working his hands together, as he gazed appealingly at his uncle; and then, as he trailed off in his speech, he reeled and clutched at the table, sweeping off a wine-glass in his effort to save himself from falling.

"Better now," said Septimus, faintly, as he sank into the chair behind him. "I am sorry, but I feel overcome, and weak, and giddy. I have had much sorrow and trouble lately, and my father's death was so sudden."

The doctor winced a little, but recovered himself in a moment; for he was used to witnessing trouble, and could bear it.

"Yes—yes—a sad thing—very sad—mournful I may say," he observed. "But my poor brother always was so distant and peculiar in his dealings with his relations. Of course you know that the funeral takes place to-morrow?"

"No," replied Septimus, "I know nothing beyond what I have told you; and I come to my father's brother for information."

"Yes, just so," said the doctor; "but I cannot refrain from blaming my poor brother. Doubtless you had given him great cause of offence, but he ought to have made some provision for you."

"I did write to him, again and again," said Septimus; "but I suppose he felt too angry, and—let it rest now. I have struggled through all my trouble without his help, and do not complain."

"Just so," said the doctor; "but it would have been more just if he had made some provision."

"You have seen his will, I suppose," said Septimus.

"Oh, no," said the doctor—"there is no will."

"Then he has left no legacies?" said Septimus.

"Not one," replied the doctor; "but I am not surprised—he never was a business man."

"I am sorry, too," said Septimus, softly; "for the sake of my cousins and yourselves."

And Septimus started as he saw the wince Mrs. Hardon gave at the mention of the word "cousins."

"Yes," said the doctor, blandly; "it would have been more just towards you. For even if he had only left you a hundred or two they would have been acceptable, no doubt."

"I don't understand you," said Septimus.

"I was alluding to your being left so unprovided for," said the doctor. "It seems so sad."

"But you told me he left no will," said Septimus, wonderingly; "and I am his only child."

The doctor smiled compassionately upon his nephew, with the air of a man removing a leg or an arm.

"There, for goodness' sake, don't go on torturing the poor fellow in that way," cried downright Mrs. Hardon. "Why don't you speak out? You see, Septimus—"

"I beg that you will be silent, Mrs. Hardon," exclaimed the doctor.

"I shall be nothing of the kind," cried Mrs. Har-

don. "The poor man has enough to suffer as it is, without being grilled over a slow fire."

Septimus gazed from uncle to aunt in a strange, bewildered way, prepared for some new shock, but unable to comprehend what blow fate meant to deal him now.

"You see, Septimus," continued Mrs. Hardon, without heeding her husband's uplifted hands—"you see, the property comes to my husband as next of kin."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Septimus, as if relieved that his aunt's communication was of no more weight. "I am the only child, and, besides, I have a son."

"Now, just see what a painful scene you have brought about," whined the doctor, reproachfully eyeing his wife.

"Indeed," interrupted Septimus, "I am sorry that the matter should be discussed; for it appears unseemly at such a time—before my poor father's remains are beneath the earth."

"If you would only have been silent," continued the doctor, not heeding the interruption. "Now, pray, my good sir," he said, turning to Septimus, "go to Messrs. Keening and Keening, my solicitors, and—"

"Tell me what it all means, aunt, or I shall go mad!" cried Septimus, catching Mrs. Hardon's hand in both of his, and gazing imploringly in her face.

"Well, the plain truth of the matter is this," said Mrs. Hardon—

"Pray be silent, Mrs. Hardon," said the doctor. "My solicitors—"

"You were not born in wedlock," said Mrs. Hardon.

"Who dares say that is true?" shouted Septimus, with eyes flashing—"who dares speak in that way of my poor mother?" he exclaimed. "It's a lie—a base lie!"

And in spite of Septimus Hardon's plainness, his years, the dust and shabby clothing, there was in him a nobleness of aspect that made the doctor look mean by comparison, as he stood there furiously eyeing both in turn, and thinking then no more of his father's money than if it had been so much dirt beneath his feet. That such an aspersion should be cast upon the fame of the mother whose memory he tenderly loved seemed to him monstrous; and it was well for Doctor Hardon that he did not think it necessary to answer the sternly-put question; for most assuredly, had he replied, Septimus would have taken him by the throat.

"I'm sure I don't know," said Mrs. Hardon. "All I know is, that it's very sad, and I'm very, very sorry for you."

But Doctor Hardon, taken aback at first by the fierce mien of Septimus, had now somewhat recovered his confidence; while the anger of the nephew was as shortlived, so utterly bewildering was the news he now heard. The insult to his mother's memory, the snatching away of the competence that seemed in his hands, the cool self-possession of his uncle—all completely staggered him, and he knew not what to say or do.

"Sir," said the doctor, rising and placing a hand within his waistcoat as he spoke with great dignity—

"sir, I must beg that this scene, this unseemly brawling, may not be continued in my house. You can find my solicitors, who will give you all the information you may require. The funeral takes place to-morrow, and, under the circumstances, I have taken upon myself the duty of seeing that proper respect is paid to the departed. You are fully aware that your presence would not have been even tolerated for an instant in my brother's house during his lifetime, and you presume on my forbearance by treating me as you do. Under the circumstances, I decline to hold any further communication with you. Had you come in humbleness, and treated me with respect, I will not say what I might not have been tempted to do for you out of pity. As to your assumption of ignorance of your illegitimacy, it is simply absurd, for it is a matter of which you must have been fully aware. You know well that when my brother declined to hold any further communication with you it was not merely on account of your opposition to his wishes, but because it was painful to his feelings to be constantly reminded of the sins of his youth. I think too, now, that if you have any right feeling left you will have the decency to end this most unseemly meeting by leaving at once, for it is to me, after my late sufferings, most painful. My poor brother!"

Doctor Hardon paused, to bury his face in his handkerchief, and congratulate himself upon the very effective way in which he had acted his part. He then made a show of wiping away a tear, and Mrs. Hardon did likewise; but in the one case the tear was genuine, in the other counterfeit coin.

As for Septimus Hardon, he had never made but one enemy in his life—himself; but had he owned a score, and they had stood around him at that minute, not a man of them could have struck a blow at the abject, crushed, spiritless, broken man, as, without word—almost without thought—he mechanically glanced round the room, turned, and then slowly walked out, closely followed by Mrs. Hardon, who passed something into his hand as she closed the door upon his retreating form.

CHAPTER XVIII.—SEEKING HOSPITALITY.

"WHY, if it aint you, Master Sep, as I thought we were never going to see no more!" cried Mrs. Lower, to the desolate-looking man outside her snug bar. "But my; you do look bad, and it's close upon ten years since I've set eyes upon you. There, do come in and sit down. Yes, that's poor Lower's chair; he's been gone years now, Master Sep, and I'm left a lone widow, my dear; but your name was one of the last words he spoke—your name and poor Miss Agnes's. Do you ever see her in the big city, Master Sep?"

Septimus shook his head.

"Has she left here?" he said.

"Didn't you know?" said Mrs. Lower. "Ah, yes, long enough ago!" and she stooped her head and whispered in her visitor's ear. "But there, we needn't talk about troubles now. How haggard and worn you do look! And how's Mrs. Septimus? I always think of her as Mrs. Grey. But what's it to be now? Isn't it awful about poor master, whom I'd never have left if I'd known what was to happen?"

No, Master Sep, not to marry a dozen Lowers, and be the mistress of fifty County Arms; though, rest him! poor Lower was a good, kind husband, for all we were elderly folk to wed, and had forgotten how to make love. Now, say a hot cup of tea, Master Sep, or a hot steak with a little ketchup. If you'd been a bit sooner, there was a lovely sweetbread in the house; but there, it's no use to talk of that, so say the steak and tea. I am glad to see you, my dear boy!"

Septimus signified his desire for the tea, and Charles was summoned, and dismissed with his orders, but not without making a tolerable investigation of the guest whom his mistress delighted to honour—an investigation apparently not very satisfactory, from the imperious way in which he gave his orders in the kitchen.

"Now, just a toothful of my orange cordial, Master Sep. Now, don't say no, because you must. I make it myself, and the gentlemen take it on hunting-days. Now, tip it up like a good boy; and here's a biscuit. See now; don't it put you in mind of old times, when you were a naughty child, and wouldn't take your physic? How time does go, to be sure; why, it's only like yesterday. But there, I won't bother you. Have a pair of slippers and a comfortable wash. Did you bring any luggage?"

Ten minutes passed, and then Septimus was again seated in the snug bar, with the kettle singing its song of welcome upon the hob; a savoury steak was before him; and the comely old dame, in her rustling black silk, smilingly pouring out the strong tea she had been brewing, taking a cup too herself, "just for sociability sake," as she told her visitor.

"And so poor master's gone, and you're coming down to the old place again?" said Mrs. Lower.

Septimus groaned.

"Ah, Master Sep, I can respect your feelings; but though poor master's dead and gone, he had his failings, while he never did his duty either by you or your poor mother."

Septimus Hardon nearly dropped his cup as he gazed blankly in his old nurse's face.

"What—what do you mean?" he exclaimed.

"Why, he was always hard, and—But there, poor man, he's dead and gone, and we all have our failings, and plenty of them. But come, my dear boy, pray do eat something."

Septimus tried to eat a few morsels, but his appetite was gone, and he soon laid down his knife and fork.

"Of course you'll come down and live at the old place, Master Sep?" said Mr. Lower.

Septimus shook his head sadly.

"Oh, Master Sep!" cried the old lady, "don't sell it; don't part with it, it would be a sin."

"But it will never be mine!" cried Septimus, passionately. "Oh, nurse, nurse! this is a hard and a bitter world. I came down here almost in rags, tramping down like a beggar, and now, in cold and brutal terms, my uncle tells me that I am a bastard—that I have no right to enter my own father's house; while, if this is true, I am a beggar still."

Mrs. Lower looked astounded.

"What," she exclaimed, "does he mean to say?—But there, it's nonsense. You can soon prove to him that you are not."

"How?" exclaimed Septimus, wearily. "Everything goes against me. I have been away ten years; my father sent me from his house; he refused all communications with me; and now I return on the day before the funeral."

"Oh, but you must go to the lawyers!" cried Mrs. Lower. "They can put you right."

The couple sat talking for some time. It was refreshing to Septimus to find so sincere a welcome, for he had put Mrs. Lower's hospitality to the test on the strength of the sovereign his aunt had slipped into his hand. But the old dame could give him no information touching his birth, and but little respecting the place and time of his father's marriage.

Weary at length of the subject, Septimus listened to the history of Somesham during the past few years, till, taking compassion upon her visitor's jaded looks, Mrs. Lower showed him his bed-room, where he tried to forget his present sorrows in sleep.

But sleep came not, and he tossed feverishly from side to side, bewildered by the thoughts that rushed through his brain—old faces, old scenes, and, foremost among them, home and the stern countenance of his father came crowding back. Now he would doze, but to start up in a few minutes under the impression that he was called. He dozed off again and again, but always to start up with the same fancy, and once he felt so sure that he leaped out of bed and opened his door; but the dark passage was empty, and all without quite still, so he returned to his bed, sat there for a few minutes thinking, and then went to the window, drew the blind, and stood gazing out upon the buildings of the familiar marketplace.

The wind swept by, swinging the old sign to and fro, while all looked so calm and peaceful that he returned to his bed, and again tried for rest, falling into a fevered, half sleeping, half waking state, wherein the old faces still came crowding back, now nearer and nearer, now seeming to vanish away into nothingness, till at last that one old face seemed to exclude all others, and he saw his father as he saw him last, frowning harshly upon him; but soon the face assumed an aspect of pity—a look that told the suffering man that he was forgiven, before it changed into the frigid hardness of death.

Septimus Hardon started up in bed and gazed at the dim, shaded window, hardly realizing where he was, as he tried to get rid of the dread image which oppressed him; but the night through, hour after hour, as soon as he closed his eyes, there was the same cold, stern face, as though impressed upon his brain, and wanting but the exclusion of the light for him to direct his gaze inward upon the fixed lineaments. So on, hour after hour, dozing and starting up, till the first streaks of the coming day appeared in the east, and, as they grew stronger, peered in through the bed-room window, and held forth to view the various objects in the room in a half-shadowed, ghostly manner that completely chased

away the remaining desire for sleep that lingered with the unnerved man.

"Knocked three times, mem," said Charles, "and can't make him hear."

"Never mind," said Mrs. Lower. "I'll go myself presently."

Mrs. Lower had carefully prepared what she considered a snug breakfast, and put her regular body to no slight inconvenience by waiting past her usual hour for the morning meal; but she thought of her visitor's fatigue and trouble.

"He can't do better than sleep, poor boy," she muttered, descending the stairs, after listening at the bed-room door for the third time; when she sat in the bar and waited for quite an hour, till suddenly a thought struck her, which set her trembling; and wringing her hands, and her comely old face worked as she tried to keep back her tears.

"Oh, if he has—if he has! Oh, my poor boy!" she exclaimed, hurrying up the staircase, and stumbling at every second step in her agitation. "Oh, Charles, come with me!"

The door yielded to her touch, and almost falling against the bed, Mrs. Lower found it empty, while the pillow was quite cold.

"Oh, look round, look round, Charles!" she gasped, as she sank upon her knees at the bedside, and buried her face in the clothes.

"No one here, mem," said Charles, after a cursory glance round—not being able to comprehend his mistress's emotion.

"Oh, look behind the door, Charles!" gasped Mrs. Lower; "and at the bedposts."

"Silk dress behind the fust, and wallance and hangings on the seconds," said Charles, methodically. "What next, mem?"

"Can't you see him, Charles?" said Mrs. Lower, slowly raising her head.

"No, mem," said Charles; "he's gone, safe. Did he pay, mem?"

"Nonsense!" cried Mrs. Lower, angrily; "he was a friend of mine."

And then the doubting dame carefully examined the room, looking in the most impossible of corners for the missing visitor, and only stopping as she was about to peer up the chimney by seeing a half-concealed grin upon the face of Charles.

"I'll ask Boots if he's seen him, mem," said Charles, to get out of his difficulty.

But that gentleman had neither seen Septimus Hardon nor the articles of clothing after which he was named; so that it seemed evident that the visitor had taken his unbrushed boots and departed.

"So very strange!" muttered Mrs. Lower to herself.

"The seediest pair of boots we've ever had in the place," said Charles in confidence to the chambermaid.

And then, after due cogitation, he came to the conclusion that if many of the visitors to the County Arms were like the unknown of the past night, his situation would not be worth the energy he displayed for the comfort of all who sought there rest and refreshment.

Colt Hunting.

HE who wanders among the tors and swamps of Dartmoor might well be excused for fancying himself outside the regulations which govern society. Nature, in her primitive condition, and, it must be said, in one of her most savage humours, prompts the idea that there, at least, a man is free to do as he pleases. Get out of sight of the convict prison, and everybody but yourself may, for aught that appears to the contrary, be non-existent. Hills crowned with seeming ruins of desolated castles, valleys full of black and treacherous bogs, an occasional flock of startled sheep, or a pony that utters a defiant neigh before vanishing over the nearest crest, and nowhere a sign that man exercises authority—such is Dartmoor. But there could be no greater mistake than to suppose that laws and customs take no cognizance of this wild region. Dartmoor, in point of fact, is very much governed, and any attempt to exercise man's primitive freedom in and upon it would speedily rouse to action the whole force of the Duchy of Cornwall.

Suppose, for example, that you, living in the neighbourhood, and being struck with the advantage of the moor as a grazing ground for ponies, turned out a squadron of those animals upon it. In less than a year a clerk in the Duchy of Cornwall Office in London would take from its pigeon-hole, and fill up with names and dates, a document running as follows:—"Manor of —, Forest of Dartmoor.—To the Reeve of the Forest aforesaid.—These are in the name of his Royal Highness Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, to will and require you, immediately on sight hereof, to summon and warn twenty men, or as many as you shall think proper, to assist you that you and they do make the drift of colts for the — quarter of the Forest aforesaid, on —, the — day of —, and that you and they do bring, lead, and drive all such colts as shall be there found on the — quarter aforesaid unto — Pound, without twining, turning back, or letting go any of them, that so a true account may be taken of the said colts and all such estrayers and unlicensed colts as shall be there found may be seized and kept in safe custody until they be surrendered to the use of his said Royal Highness, according to the ancient customs of the said Forest; and you are likewise to give a true account in writing of the several names and places of abode of all and every person or persons whatsoever that shall in any wise molest, hinder, or deny you in the lawful execution of this my warrant. And that you do make a due return of the execution hereof fail not at your peril.—Given at the Duchy of Cornwall Office, London, this — day of —, one thousand eight hundred and —, by command of the Lord Warden and Master Forester."

Having received this imposing document, the Reeve would send out his emissaries to certain commoners of the forest, ordering them, on pain of amercement, to boot and saddle, and forthwith to scour hill and dale, driving before them all equine things. Then would your "unlicensed" animals meet the eye of the wrathful Reeve, by whom such penalties as Dartmoor law hath in that case made

and provided would at once be enforced, to the salutary repression of unwarranted ideas concerning the liberty of the subject.

Not very long ago the Duchy issued its mandate to the Reeve of the north quarter of the forest. There was to be a drift of colts to Halstock Pound, over against the picturesque "Cleave," through which the West Okement babbles its way. The order had to be obeyed; and in due time, armed with the Duchy's warrant, as a sort of fiery cross, the Reeve's man tramped o'er moss and fell to summon the vassals for duty to their lord. From the foot of Causand Beacon away round, following the border of the moor, to Lydford, went the messenger, and the very next morning, lest unlicensed animals should be driven out of bounds, the hunt began.

How jolly, the reader may bethink him, to mount some fiery and impatient steed, and career over hill and dale on such a mission—to realize, in a corner of England, the half-wild life of the Australian stockman, or his who, on the American prairies, hunts down the mustang! But, as a matter of fact, fiery and impatient steeds are better in the stable than on Dartmoor, and the rider who does not know every acre of the Forest should leave colt-chasing to those who do. The men who answered the Reeve's call were to the manner born, as were the clever cattle they rode. Both knew the ground; and while the riders could pick their devious way from point to point, over quaking bog and tangled morass, the ridden could climb like goats, and step from stone to stone with the sure-footedness of an Alpine mule.

Pursued by such hunters, the colts had no chance. In vain might they snort defiance, and show the cleanest possible pair of heels. Equal fleetness and greater cunning always headed them back. I had made my way from under the shadow of Belstone Church tower, which for above six hundred years has stood "four square to all the winds that blow"—they do blow hereabouts at times—skirted the base of Belstone Tor, and forded the West Okement in the direction of the pound, when first signs of the drift appeared.

Was it not a Devonshire lad who gave swinging on a gate as the highest exercise of power in the direction of enjoyment? Just across the river I came upon a yokel who had got as nearly as possible to that state of bliss. He was sitting on a gate, sweeping the jagged line of the tors far above with keen inquiring eyes, and in a condition of eager expectancy.

"There be the colts," and the forefinger of the yokel pointed upwards, but, for anything I could see, pointed only to the grotesque rocks which crowned a far-away summit. *Bien entendu*, I had not a pair of Dartmoor optics, trained to act as telescopes and "spot" a brown pony on a brown hillside miles away. At length, some tiny creatures were distinguishable even by common eyes; and shortly the *silhouette* of a man on horseback stood out against the sky, while a faint whoop came down as from the heavens.

"There's Bill Muggeridge!" exclaimed the yokel; "I know his voice, sure enough."

Mr. Muggeridge is a Nimrod on these occasions, and an air of proud recognition marked my rural friend as he turned to breast the hill lying between us and the pound.

"All in to begin," now that Bill has arrived on the scene; so let everybody who wishes to see sport breast the hill likewise. I do so, labouring up and up, among bracken, furze, and gorse, till, looking back, the river is dwindled to a thread and the music of its waters falls a tiny stream of sound upon the ear. Across part of a moorland farm, and we see before us the quadrangular stone-walled enclosure within which presently the four-footed rovers, driven by Bill Muggeridge and his fellows, will be confined.

What a place for a man to sit and dream away the summer day! On one side the moor, crowned with its savage tors, and sombre in despite of bloom of gorse and heather; on the other a variegated plain stretching far as eye can reach towards the Bristol Channel, smiling with the fruits of autumn and dotted with pleasant dwellings.

But the business of none of us up at Halstock Pound is "mooning." A man has brought sundry barrels of ale from the plain below; and while we look for the apparition of Bill Muggeridge and the drift swooping down upon us, he puts his vendibles in order with the air of a man expecting liberal custom. Many a year, according to his own confession, has he purveyed for the colt drivers, and well he knows their mighty consumptive power. Presently we are joined by sundry of what Charles Dickens used to call "pollard old men," from whom the scythe of Time has lopped whatever grace and beauty once was theirs, leaving nothing but a gnarled stump of immense vitality. The moorland borders so swarm with these relics of the past that one might be excused for withholding assent to the dictum that the strength of fourscore years is but "labour and sorrow."

I was shown over Belstone Church the other day by a sexton who had held the post for more than half a century, and, at eighty-six, hopes to keep it for years to come. Any evening I can see a youth of eighty-five tramping sturdily home from his work across the moor; and I have been told of another who, when over a hundred, marvelled at the need he was in to seek a dentist.

This is the sort of old boy represented at the colts' drifts, and right heartily do the veterans enter into the spirit of the scene. Our company is further made up of some well-mounted squires and yeomen; a few ladies, among whom it is easy to recognize the genial face of a popular contralto; an officer or two from the neighbouring camp; and sundry specimens of that loafing class without whom no gathering would possibly be complete.

We have not long to wait near the empty pound. The voice of Mr. Muggeridge, now in stentorian unison with that of "Dartmoor Bill," another local worthy, comes to us over the crest above, mingled with much cracking of whips and barking of dogs.

"Here they be, sure-ly!" exclaims a "pollard" moorman, his eyes kindling with their ancient fire; and, looking up, we see trotting, galloping, snorting, kicking down the heathery slope, score upon score of animals, to all appearance as wild as though they

had lived their lives upon the Pampas of Mexico. Above them, spread out in light skirmishing order, or circling round to cut off a possible flank movement, are the drivers, mounted on their handy ponies, and dashing over the broken ground with apparently suicidal recklessness. The picture is complete, and so realizes what has been told in travellers' tales, that, but for the unmistakable English plain behind and below us, we might fancy ourselves far away on the outskirts of civilization.

"One man may drive a horse to water, but a hundred can't make him drink." The proverb comes to mind as the drivers push the surging mass of cattle nearer and nearer the stone walls of the pound, and the marvel grows upon me how they can be made to file through the narrow entrance. A motley and intractable lot it is that the net of the Duchy has enclosed—old mares with recollections of previous drivings, such as prompt them to lash out their unarmed heels in an excess of ill-temper; illegal sires presently to be pounced upon by the Reeve in the name of his Royal Highness, and colts of various ages, but of almost uniform wildness. These last give us the fun. They cannot understand the procedure at all, and are resolved, if it be possible, to defy the Duchy and all its works. How they career from point to point with flying manes and frightened eyes, snorting their rage and fear, and galloping close up to the whip-thong of the driver before wheeling round to try another rush. Presently a few succeed in breaking the toils. A lively young colt, which has distinguished itself from the first, heads half a dozen others, and dashes at a weak place in the ring. There is a scurry to head them back; men shout, dogs bark, and whips crack, but the wild horses have the best of it; and the last we see of them is a flourish of their long tails as they disappear over the ridge, followed by a posse of drivers in hot pursuit.

The rest, more and more closely hemmed in as the semicircle contracts, draw together in a heaving mass, and now we see something very like human nature among these brute breasts. Escape being impossible, they vent their anger upon one another, and for some time little is heard but the noise of blows inflicted by angry heels. Heeding this not at all, the drivers, with many a shout, draw closer in, till the mass is forced back upon the narrow gateway of the pound. Will they enter? An old mare, having had enough experience to make her philosophical, answers the question by walking in, and the rest—human nature again!—are now eager to follow her example. With many a crush and kick, and many a desperate struggle for precedence, the animals force their way past the gate, all but one pretty little foal, which cannot be brought to submit its neck to an unknown yoke. We admire its beautiful form and graceful action as it careers about seeking a loophole through which to attain the freedom of the moor; but the mandate of the Duchy says there must be no "letting go," and the foal is everywhere headed back, snorting with anger. "Turn out the mares," exclaims Mr. Mugeridge, just as another driver makes the step unnecessary. Leaping from his pony, he gives the word, and the docile beast

advances to the gate, followed by the colt. A minute afterwards the capture is effected.

Other drifts are looked for now, and the Reeve is certain that the Lidford men will bring in a lot. But they come with less than half a dozen, the soldiers encamped above Okehampton having, as they say, driven the others back. Clearly the official mind does not credit this explanation; but there is nothing for it save to do business with those which have been caught. Now begins a scene that calls to mind many a classic story of combat between man and beast. For various purposes of law and custom it is necessary bodily to capture most of the animals within the pound, and the operation takes place as in some ancient arena. Those of us who are spectators mount the walls of the enclosure, in the centre of which stand the representative of the Duchy and his aids. Presently a colt is singled out, and half a dozen stalwart fellows drive it, with some twenty others, into a corner. The victim may be hedged round by its companions, but that matters nothing. With a shout, one of the men dashes at the four-footed throng, which scatter in terror, seizes the colt by the neck, and is whirled about the pound with frightful speed among a tumbling mass of flying quadrupeds. Soon another seizes the animal's tail, and holds on with might and main, two more rush at its head, and for some minutes we see the grandest of wrestling matches. But the termination is the same in each case—the colt lies prostrate, panting with excitement, and the men work their will upon it. Either it is haltered and led away, after many an unavailing struggle for liberty, or a hole is bored through one ear for the purpose of tying thereto a distinguishing card. This process goes on all the afternoon, with many an episode which causes the grim spectators above to echo shouts of laughter.

Stimulated by the nature of their work, and by copious draughts of beer, the men become more and more daring. Again and again we see them hurled to the ground among the thundering hoofs of the frightened colts, or dragged round the enclosure as part of a struggling mass of arms, legs, and bodies, human and equine. Eventually the demands of the Duchy are satisfied, and one after another the animals are set at liberty, or, mayhap, marched off by their owners to the slavery of the pony-carriage and the saddle. The representative of the Duchy counts his gains in the way of fines, his stalwart assistants drink more beer, and, having no ponies to struggle with, get up wrestling matches among themselves; and, as the lingering visitor turns homeward, he hears far above him the troll of a Devonshire song, with chorus loud enough to frighten even the pony that has placed the longest distance between itself and Halstock Pound.

FRENCH WOLVES.—At Argenton, a wolf in its foray attacked and severely wounded seven persons, but was ultimately transixed, by a youth aged seventeen, with a pitchfork, while the mother chopped off the head. In the stomach of the animal was found the thumb of a labourer he had just bitten off. A Paris journal has presented the lad with a gold watch and chain for his pluck.

The Major's Niece.

PART II.

THE next morning the sun shone out gloriously, and the fresh, cool breeze shook down the yellow leaves in showers on the carefully-kept lawn in front of the major's fine old manor-house, the grounds of which sloped down to the lake that belonged to the property. Little green islands showed here and there on the surface of the water, which rippled in the breeze; the cries of the wild fowl came floating in through the open window of the breakfast-room, where Mrs. Ingleby, Elsie, and the three guests were assembled, partaking of tea and coffee, eggs and bacon, and many other good things of a homely description; for the major was simple in his tastes, and liked the fare at his place to be like that of a farm-house, plain and substantial.

"What a lovely morning!" said Bertram. "A morning like this would make any one feel in good spirits."

"Do you ever feel otherwise, Bertram?" asked Marshall, who looked pale after a sleepless night.

The other laughed, as he answered—

"No one would ask you that question, Tom!"

"Perhaps he's had a letter from his tailor by this morning's post," suggested Holmes, with a slight sneer, which made Elsie look at him in surprise.

"As your uncle is better, you will come out to-day, I hope, Miss Roberts," said Marshall, ignoring the last remark, though he had flushed slightly with annoyance.

"I hardly know. Perhaps he will want me," she said, with hesitation.

"Oh, I say, Miss Roberts, you mustn't back out, you know," said Holmes, in a tone of remonstrance. "And you promised to come with us on the water when we had a try after the ducks. Bertram and I have been trying to persuade Mrs. Ingleby to come, but she won't hear of it. She's afraid we should upset the boat."

The lady alluded to smiled primly, and shook her head.

"I will see what my uncle says," Elsie said, as they rose from the table. "If he can spare me, I shall be very pleased to come."

She ran upstairs, and returned in a few minutes to say that the major preferred that she should go. A little discussion ensued, with the result that one of the keepers was ordered to have the boat ready in half an hour, and Elsie went to get ready. When she appeared again the young men were preparing to start.

"I am not much of a sportsman, so I shall stay in this morning," said Marshall to Bertram, whose smile almost disappeared in his surprise.

"Why is that?" he exclaimed. "Oh, you must come, we couldn't do without you, could we, Holmes?"

"By Jove, we shall have to if he won't come!" said the dragon, sticking in his eyeglass, while he looked Tom all over. "Mrs. Ingleby has infected him with her nervousness, I suppose."

Tom Marshall coloured as he looked at Elsie, but

she would not say anything to induce him to accompany them. "He shall do as he likes," she said to herself. "If he does not care to come, he had better stay at home."

And though the lieutenant's sneering words and tone disgusted her, she would not give a look in Tom's direction, but waited in silence for his next words.

"Thanks, Bertram, but I'll come another time instead."

He watched their departure from the porch, and then turned into the house with a sigh.

"That fellow tries his best to taunt me into saying something before her that I should repent afterwards. I cannot bear this state of things much longer. I will ask her, like a man, the first opportunity; and if she says no, I shall go to-morrow, for I could not stay and see her his. Is she blind, I wonder, that she does not see his insufferable conceit and overbearing manner? I wish I had gone with them. As likely as not they will have an accident, for he has no more brains than a—billiard ball; and Bertram knows nothing about a boat. They are entirely dependent on the keeper. I don't believe one of the three could swim if they were upset. Oh, what a fool I was, not to think of that before they started. I ought to have gone."

He looked out of the study window absently for a time, and then went up to see the major, so as to get away from his thoughts.

"Hallo!" exclaimed the old gentleman, as he entered. "Not gone yet? I thought I heard you start half an hour ago."

"The others are gone," said the young man, leaning his elbow on the chimney-piece, and looking down at the major's puckered red face, with its fierce eyes gleaming under his white eyebrows, and heavy white moustache, while he wondered whether the irritable but kind-hearted old soldier had ever known what it was to love.

"My dear boy," said Major Roberts, guessing something of his thoughts, "I can read you like a book. You are hipped and miserable because you think my little girl likes that—Fred Holmes. She doesn't, I know better. She is just like her mother was at her age," he continued, the rugged lines of his face softening as he spoke. "Ah, Tom, you think I don't understand what you feel; but, I do. I have felt it myself. But I hope you won't be a lonely old bachelor like I am. Confound this gout! It makes my eyes water when a twinge like that comes. There, if I'd known, I should never have let her go this morning. I thought you would be there, and I know you are steady and careful, but I am not so sure those two are to be trusted."

"For Heaven's sake don't talk like that, major. I've repented ever since; but what can I do?"

"Have out the other boat, and go after them."

"Thank you, Major Roberts, that's a good idea. I'll be off at once. Good-bye."

And, with a nod of farewell, he ran downstairs and snatched up his hat. Then he went into the dining-room, and, ringing the bell, asked for the second keeper. In a very short space of time he was being sculled over the lake—his gun in his hand—to join the others, who were quite at the

opposite side, while a report and puff of smoke at intervals told him they were having some sport.

"It looks foolish," he thought, "to follow them when I refused to be of the party; but it is better than remaining indoors and imagining all sorts of horrors."

Then his fancy returned to the major, and to the idea that had suggested itself to him when the old gentleman spoke of Elsie's mother. It was plain enough, and he felt certain when he thought about it, that Major Roberts had loved her, even as he loved Elsie, and that she had preferred his brother. And so he had never married, but had gone into the army, to retire at last and take charge of his niece, who had lost both mother and father. The young man's conjectures were quite correct, and somehow his respect for the major increased as he thought of it; while the little romance his imagination weaved out of the past suited with his present humour, as he forgot for the time his anxiety on account of one occupant of the other boat.

His musings were interrupted by the voice of the keeper, who had stopped rowing, and was looking over his shoulder.

"If Lieutenant Holmes gets standing up and jumping about like that there, he'll upset the boat, as sure as a gun, afore many minutes is over."

Marshall turned quickly, and could see that Bertram and Holmes were both standing up, the latter taking aim at a flock of coots flying overhead.

In the first boat, Elsie's quick eyes had discovered that Tom Marshall was coming to join them; and her heart beat faster with pleasure, though she tried to check the feeling, telling herself that he did not care for her, after all. She knew that he had asked her uncle's permission to address her, but since that he had seemed so distant and strange that she had withdrawn into herself in his presence.

It seemed that his approach was unobserved by either of the others; and she said nothing, but watched the progress of the coots, at which the lieutenant seemed about to fire. The birds were crossing the lake, beyond the boat containing Marshall and the keeper; and, as they suddenly swerved down till their legs touched the water, it seemed to the girl that boat and birds were in a direct line as Holmes laid his finger on the trigger. A swift glance at his face showed her such a strange expression upon it that a thought went to her heart like an electric shock, and, with a faint cry, she started up to dash the gun aside. In an instant they were all in the water, and their boat wrong side up.

"Great Heaven!" exclaimed Tom, as he saw the accident. "Row, man, row!"

And standing up, he threw off his coat, waistcoat, and boots, while the man, exerting all his strength, made the boat fly through the water, the perspiration streaming down his face as he did so.

As he stood there, Marshall saw Holmes and Bertram clinging to the capsized boat, which was floated away by the breeze, while the keeper—who could swim well—was paddling about and looking round him in a confused sort of way.

But where was Elsie?

There was not a sign of her anywhere on the surface of the water, and a groan burst from the young

man's breast as he sprang from the boat, dived and rose again, looking everywhere, but seeing nothing of her he sought. Again he dived, and again, but each time rose to the surface without any result.

"Help, help!" shrieked the lieutenant from the boat. "Do you want me to be drowned?"

"I don't suppose they mind much," said Bertram, coolly. "Good heavens, where can the poor girl be? It will be all up with her, I fear, if she is under the water much longer. Well, I can't swim much, but—here goes!"

And he let go of the boat and swam towards the others.

"Help!" shouted the lieutenant again. "Brown, bring that boat here!"

The keeper who had sculled Tom Marshall across was now trying with a boat-hook to get hold of Elsie's dress, but in vain; and he only responded to this appeal by a growl and by again plunging in his arm up to the shoulder.

The other keeper was following Marshall's example and diving; but a very little of that was enough for him, and he gave it up, and looked in astonishment and admiration as the young man disappeared again and again.

At last Tom could go down no more, and, panting and out of breath, he hung on to the side of the boat.

"Let me help you in, sir," said Brown, the second keeper, ceasing his action with the boat-hook for a minute.

"No, no! For God's sake go on with what you are doing," gasped Marshall, his face drawn and agonized.

"You'd better get in," cried Bertram, from a little distance. "You'll only kill yourself, for you can't do any more."

"Here, Brown," called Holmes again, "a sovereign if you bring that boat here! I shall be drowned."

"Not you," growled the keeper to himself, but otherwise he took not the slightest notice.

At that instant Bertram, who had been with difficulty keeping himself afloat, called out, hoarsely—

"Here, quick, Marshall! She's under the boat!" and immediately disappeared.

Tom gave vent to an exclamation of despair, and in an instant was swimming hard as his remaining strength would allow for the other boat, across the bottom of which Holmes was lying, looking wet, frightened, and savage, and giving utterance to some language not fit for ears polite.

The keeper, Brown, assisted by the other, who was still in the water, only with one arm over the gunwale, pulled Bertram into the boat as soon as he rose to the surface again. The other man then climbed in, and they rowed after Marshall, who had disappeared under the capsized one.

At last, after a breathless suspense, the young man came into sight above the water, holding Elsie in his arms. In an instant she was pulled in, and then Tom—Bertram assisting, for he had quite recovered from the effects of his total immersion.

"Row, man, row," gasped Marshall. "Hot bath—tell them—her life—Elsie—" and he sank back insensible.

"He wants it nigh as much as she do," said the keeper, as he made the boat fly through the water.

The man who had been with the first boat had remained behind, on the flat bottom of it, with the lieutenant, whose teeth chattered with cold and fear.

The breeze drifted them in time to one of the little islands, and the consequence was that they had righted the punt and were ashore and walking round before the other appeared coming for them.

Elsie and Tom Marshall both had a fight with death after this accident; but the latter recovered first, and was soon downstairs, looking white, certainly, but refusing to be considered an invalid, and anxiously listening to all the major's news about his niece.

The old gentleman had thanked him, with tears in his eyes, for his courageous behaviour, and had shaken hands with him over and over, till Tom begged him to say no more, for he was weak still, and could not bear it.

"And, after all," he said, "it is Bertram whom you ought to thank; for if it had not been for him—"

"There, that will do, my boy. I know how it all was, and if I had lost either you or my little pet it would have killed me."

Major Roberts had absolutely declined to hear of either of his guests leaving him after the accident, and so, when at last Elsie came down to the drawing-room, Holmes was the first to congratulate her on her recovery; but her reception of him was so far from warm that he soon left her, and went to knock the billiard balls about in solitude. Then Bertram went in to see her, and stayed chatting for half an hour or more, the while Elsie was wondering what had become of Marshall, and why he did not come near her. The major's gout was worse that morning, and he kept his room; while Tom shut himself up in the study, longing to see her, yet not daring to trust himself in her presence, lest he should not be able to keep back words of love, which would seem like taking advantage of her in her present weak state.

He was sitting with his face buried in his hands, thinking of the events of the last few weeks, and endeavouring to discover therefrom whether he had any hope of a favourable answer when he spoke, when the door opened, and Elsie entered. She started and turned pale on seeing him, but did not attempt to withdraw, nor to take the chair he put for her.

"I came for a book," she said, falteringly. "I did not know you were here; but I wanted to see you, to thank you for your brave act—for saving my life."

"Hush," he said, hastily, "pray say no more about that. I am more than repaid by your recovery."

"Look here," said Elsie, drawing from her pocket a shapeless mass that had once been a pocket-book. "One of the keepers sent this up to me. I opened it to see whose it was."

And she opened it again as she spoke, and he saw the remains of the white rose she had given him, still between the leaves where he had placed it.

Something in the action and look gave him new hope, and he threw his arms round her and clasped her, sobbing, to his breast.

"My poor little darling!" he said, his own eyes moist; "then you do love me, after all?"

At that instant the door opened, and the major came limping in on Bertram's arm.

"So here you are at last. Ah, my boy, what did I tell you? I knew my little pet had more sense than you thought."

And he kissed her tenderly as she went to his side.

"Confounded cad, don't you think so?" asked Lieutenant Holmes of Bertram that night.

But Bertram only smiled.

THE END.

Wolf Hunting in Brittany.*

AMONG the English tourists who cross to the northern coast of Brittany, and wander about St. Malo and Dinan—or even of those who penetrate farther west and south, to Brest, Quimper, and Vannes, and visit the mysterious stone relics of Carnac and the Morbihan—not many, we suspect, are aware that, off the line of railways, and apart from the more accessible towns, lies a district in which the wolf and the boar are still hunted down (at least nominally), after the fashion in which the fox, as a mischievous and destructive animal, was hunted and killed in this country not two centuries ago. Only last autumn, a party of travellers in Lower Brittany saw with no little astonishment five full-grown wolves and two foxes exhibited in a cart and dragged triumphantly through the streets of Quimper, all having been killed at a *grand chasse* in that immediate neighbourhood.

The *louveter*, or wolf hunter, of all this district, is appointed by the Government, and is generally some long-descended *seigneur* of sporting propensities, who fills much such a position as that occupied in England by the Master of the Quorn or of the Pytchley. His main duty is to keep under, and, in fact, to destroy if he can, the wolves of the Black Mountains, which are indeed slowly diminishing, but are still sufficiently active and numerous to be troublesome in severe winters. The *chasse au loup*, however, is too exciting and too eagerly followed for a sportsman to look forward to the complete extermination of the animal with anything but regret, and accordingly some law and some liberty are generally permitted by a skilful *louveter*.

Mr. E. Davies, an old sportsman whose otter hounds were long well known in the Dartmoor country, who is familiar with every variety of the *chasse* by flood and field, and whose "genial company" (to apply to himself words which he has used in dedicating his book to his friend, Mr. Trelawny of Coldrennick) none will forget who have once enjoyed it, has just put forth, in a very pleasant volume, his recollections of two winters spent in this wild corner of Brittany, where he hunted wolves and shot at boars to his heart's content, and where he found himself in a country not so very unlike the tor-crested wastes of Dartmoor, with which he is so familiar.

But this forest region of Brittany is grander—at least in parts—than Dartmoor. The Black Mountains lie round and about the old town of Carhaix,

* "Wolf-hunting and Wild Sport in Lower Brittany;" with illustrations by Colonel H. H. Crealocke, C.B.

in the heart of the ancient Cornouaille, the Cornouaille of Sir Tristrem and Queen Yseulte *aux blanches mains*—a country full of wild traditions and folk-lore, and retaining in perfection those old Breton ballads which M. de la Villemarqué has gathered and preserved with such religious care in his "*Barzaz-Breiz*."

Much of this Black Mountain country is a wide sandy waste, covered with furze and bracken, and with vast tracts of broom—a plant associated by the "Kernewotes" (as the people of Cornouaille call themselves) with many of their most primitive customs and household ceremonies. Thus the "messengers of marriage" who brings the wooer to the home of his intended is known as the "Bazvalan," the "broom rod," since he carries a branch of flowering broom as his wand of office. But in some parts the mountains take much wilder forms, and the forests of Dualt and Huel-goed, both near Carhaix, are grand wolf lairs. Dualt, the "black rock," is little more than a pile of granite tors, rising one above the other in endless variety; but here and there among the rocks some *sabôtier* has fixed his cabin, which he generally surrounds with a strong stake fence. This is necessary as a protection against the wolves, but it is not always effectual.

In these remote and solitary districts the wolf, if the winter is long and severe, will not hesitate to attack such a dwelling-place. Mr. Davies tells the story of an attack on a *sabôtier's* hut, round which for several nights in succession a pack of five or six wolves were heard pacing and uttering dismal howls. "Antoine and his wife, however, were determined to save their little stock; they lighted a good fire and sat up by turns to keep it burning; but at length, on a dark and tempestuous night, when the wind was whistling and the hail beating against their door, exhausted by watching, they both dropped asleep, and the wood fire soon became extinguished. At that instant a desperate rush was heard in the roof, and before Antoine could arm himself with a pike five gaunt wolves dashed in upon the floor, one after another, and, seizing his three sheep, tore and devoured them in his presence. A little dog, too, which they valued above all, was snapped up and swallowed at a gulp. Antoine is a brave man, but his heart beat audibly as from his bed he stretched out his hands to strike a light; the flint and steel were true, the resin candle was quickly ignited, and almost as rapidly as they had entered the villains sprang over an old armoire and disappeared through the roof."

"They come and go like a hurricane," said the *garde du forêt*, from whom Mr. Davies heard the story.

It has sometimes, indeed, been necessary to light fires nightly at all the road entrances to Carhaix, Callac, Gourin, Rostrenan, and other small towns in the neighbourhood of the forests, in order to save the cattle, and even the dogs, from the "maw" of the hungry wolf. Two or three wolves will tear and eat up a dog, no matter of what size, as rapidly as a pack of foxhounds will despatch a fox. And a horseman is at times not more safe among the mountains of Brittany than on an open Russian steppe.

An old wolf, according to the doctor of Carhaix,

with his family at his back, brings fearful odds against a horse and his rider. The said doctor had served in Algeria, and had some experience in the *chasse* of lions and panthers; but he declared that he had often been in far greater danger among Breton wolves. The best weapon in such a case is a box of lucifer matches. They are to be lighted on the saddle bow, and at each flash the wolves "are scattered like dust before the wind." On one occasion, when the doctor had been summoned at midnight to attend a peasant's wife in the forest of Huel-goed, he was followed by half a dozen wolves, which showed themselves on the hedge bank within six feet of his head, and disappeared behind the fence as often as he flashed a match on his saddle. This chase continued for two long leagues, and, as the wolves became bolder and bolder, and the stock of matches began to run short, the rider stood up in his stirrups, and, with all his force, brought the heavy thong of his hunting-whip down over the head and eyes of the leading wolf. Not another wolf ventured to show until the doctor and his mare were safe in the peasant's hut, which was near at hand, but dismal yells were heard round it until morning; and but for a mass of burning cinders, carried outside the door and fed until morning, the wolves would, no doubt, have broken through the roof of broom branches, and have made an end of the mare.

The Kernewotes believe that they will never attack a human being, however young or defenceless; but this is a belief which they are not too careful to put to the test, in spite of some curious evidence.

In the same forest of Huel-goed a little girl of six years old, who had been left to take charge of a small black sheep in a thicket of broom, disappeared suddenly, and the only trace of her or her sheep was a scattered bunch or two of wool. The forest was searched diligently; but nothing was heard of the child for more than six weeks, when she was seen timidly approaching the hut of a charcoal-burner. A wolf had sprung on the sheep in the broom field, and carried it on struggling in its jaws. Marie followed into the forest, screaming; and was soon lost among the trees and great rocks. She had lived on beech nuts, blackberries, and chestnuts, and declared that she had never even seen a wolf, although she must have slept night after night close to their lairs and coverts.

Under such circumstances as these it is evident that the *louveter's* duty cannot be altogether neglected, although a good sportsman hardly cares for such a day's *chasse* as that which resulted in the death of the five wolves displayed at Quiberon. The forests are enormous. The wolf is suspicious of danger, shifty, and a thorough vagabond; so that "an old one found to-day in Finisterre might tomorrow be killing his mutton on the banks of the Loire." Great and frequent destruction would therefore soon result in blank covers, and an entire waning of sport. This is accordingly carried on with strict rule and science; and many an old treatise on the *chasse du loup*, which may have been turned over by the grand seigneur of the days of Henry the Fourth, might be turned to account by the wolf-

hunters of to-day, so permanent are the traditions of sport in these primitive districts.

The hounds used are big, powerful animals, wire-haired, deep-tongued, carrying a grand head, and supported by plenty of bone. They must have in them something of the old breed of St. Hubert, the dogs from which, it is said, the foxhound of this country derives his principal strain. Mr. Davies suggests that, although he may be regarded as a Goth and a Vandal, and in spite of the worship paid to kennel pedigree, "the present gaudy English foxhound would be vastly improved for all hunting purposes—and that, too, without extinguishing one spark of his dash and ardour—if his mixed blood were again refreshed by the old standard hound blood, the *sang pur* of Lower Brittany.

As for the chasseurs who assemble at the cover-side on some grand occasion, their ceremonious greetings, bowings, and hat-liftings belong, like their hounds and their country, to a former age, and give a dash of Louis Quatorze to the gathering. All carry guns, and would as soon think of riding to hounds without them as without their saddles. But for wolf or boar, the long *couteau de chasse* is very necessary, and its use has many a time saved the life of a valuable hound or of his master.

Round the horsemen are collected the peasantry of the forests—true Celts, clad to the waist in shaggy goat-skin, their nether limbs encased in the coarsest sackcloth, their feet stockingless, but protected by huge beechen *sabôts*, well stuffed with straw, and their long curled locks, never touched either by scissors or by comb, falling wildly over back and shoulders. Their cries of "A'hr bleiz, a'hr bleiz" (*au loup*) ringing through the woods, are, we are assured, enough to terrify the stoutest wolf; and "if a stranger hear the yell it will remain impressed on his memory for many a future day."

The riding, it need hardly be said, is not exactly such as is loved of the followers of the H.H., though whoever has chased a fox among what the natives call the "Deysarts of Dartmoor" may have enjoyed something like it. The wolf takes refuge in the wildest thickets, or among huge masses of broken rock, and the *finale* must often be a scene so strangely picturesque that it is to be lamented that no Landseer has as yet penetrated the recesses of Huel-goed or of Dault, so as to reproduce it with all its strange accompaniments.

There are two remarkable wants in Lower Brittany. There are no grouse, spite of the whortleberries and the heather, and there are no gipsies. Educated Bretons know that such wanderers exist, and call them Bohemians; but they are never seen in the country. It may be that the wolves have had something to do with their absence, since it would not be easy for gipsies to protect unhoused beasts from their attacks. But the Kernewotes themselves are sufficiently picturesque, although their brood-thatched cabins hardly group so well in a "Callot" landscape as a circle of Romany tents.

The folk of the towns pronounce the natives of the forests and the Black Mountains to be nearly as savage and as irreclaimable as the wolves; but this is by no means the judgment of those who have lived among them, and have come to know them well.

Mr. Davies, himself a Welshman, soon found himself able to understand, and to make himself understood, in the Breton dialect of Cornouaille; and he declares that, after a long and agreeable sojourn, passed in daily association with the peasantry, he found them "inoffensive, indolent, and scrupulously honest, although in a state of squalor and poverty that beggars description." This is a truly Celtic picture—especially if we add to it the romance and superstition which, as we know, are even more strongly developed in Brittany than in Wales, or in the Scottish highlands. And a sportsman who should make Carhaix his headquarters would find himself—at least if he fares as well as Mr. Davies did—not badly off. But the host of La Tour d'Auvergne may no longer be the ingenious M. Mar-seillier, once *chef de cuisine* on board King Louis Philippe's yacht; and, no doubt, in the matter of *la note*, ten or fifteen years have made a great difference.

It must not be supposed that Mr. Davies writes only as a sportsman. He is a scholar and a man of culture, with a sharp eye for picturesque scenery, and for all such points of natural history as come in his way. Still he is essentially a *chasseur*, and would not, perhaps, altogether reject the churchwarden's explanation of an important word, in a story which he tells as follows:—A North Devon rector was much in want of a curate. He was also the master of a rattling pack of hounds; and his churchwarden, Tozer, paying the market town a visit, was thus accosted by his grocer:—

"Well, Mr. Tozer, have ye got a coorate yit, for Bridgwell?"

"Not yit; they don't all suit maister; but here's his advertisement, so I reckon he'll soon get one:—'Wanted, a curate for Bridgwell; must be a gentleman of moderate and orthodox views.'

"Orthodox, Mr. Tozer. What doth he mean by orthodox?"

"Well," said the churchwarden, thoughtfully, and in deep perplexity, knowing the double nature of the curate's duties, secular as well as sacred, "Well, I can't exactly say; but I reckon 'tis a man as can ride pretty well."

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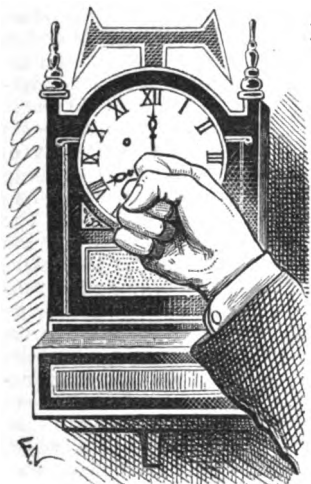
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BY GEO. MANVILLE FENN.

CHAPTER XIX.—"NOTHING LIKE LEATHER."



HE very morning upon which waiter Charles, of the County Arms, Somesham, spoke so disparagingly of Septimus Hardon's boots, the maker, or rather re-maker of the said boots sat, as soon as it was broad daylight—not an extremely early hour in his home—industriously plying his craft, till, after divers muttered anathemas, a voice growled—

"Confound it, Ike, I wish that old lapstone was at the bottom of the Thames. Who's to sleep?"

"Get up, then," said the lapstone-smiter, slowly and heavily.

"Get up!" growled the voice—"get up! What, in the middle of the night! Aint six yet, is it?"

"Just struck," said the lapstone-man, following the example of the clock, and hammering vigorously at a scrap of leather about to be used in the repair of an old boot before him; while, from sundry smothered growls coming from the room behind the shop where the shoemaker was at work, it was evident that the idler had buried a portion, if not the whole of his face, beneath the blankets, and again offered sacrifice to the sleepy god.

It had always been a matter of dispute amongst the confraternity as to where Matthew Space slept. Some said that he reposed nightly amongst the casuals at St. Martin's Workhouse; but as, when he had work, he would often be at it by half-past eight in the morning, it was evident that he did not lodge there; for the most industrious would not be at liberty for another hour, on account of the work to be done in payment for the lodging. Others talked of the Adelphi, and the recesses of Waterloo Bridge. In short, there was always plenty of chaff flying concerning old Matt's lodgings; but the cleverest never threshed out the grain of wheat they sought, for the old man was as close a husk as was ever attacked by flail. His club was generally considered to be the mouldy, fungoid-looking house in Hemlock-court, where he could mostly be found of an evening, if the seeker had failed to see him sitting over his pint pot in Bell-yard; and, according to circumstances, he dined at various places. If trade flourished, and the ill wind that blew misery to Chancery suitors wafted half-crowns to his pocket, he dined in state at the cook-shop, shut up in one

of the little elbow-cramping boxes, where there were dirty table-cloths, and everything was steamy and sticky with the pervading vapour, whose odour was as that of the soup-copper after the "inmates" have had their pauper repast; sometimes in the street, as we have seen, when his dinners varied—kidney pies, saveloys, peas pudding served on paper, or perhaps only the warm tuber taken from a potato-can; though, when funds were low, Matt generally leaned towards the kidney pieman, an old friend with a red nose and a white apron, augmented at night by very business-like white sleeves, when, extinguishing the coke-fire of his tin, he became a trotter himself for the time being, as he went from public-house to gin-palace, disposing of his stock of succulent sheep's-feet. There was a great deal of the epicure in Matt Space, and had he been a Roman emperor he might have been as lavish in the recorded worship of the gastric region. As it was, he had always looked upon money as of value only for the pleasure it afforded his palate, till better feelings had been roused within him. Well versed was Matt in the edibles best suited for families of large size but small income; he was deep in tripe, was old Matt Space, and he knew the shop in Clare and Newport Markets best worthy of confidence. You never caught him buying sausages at random, nor yet purchasing his baked sheep's-heads or faggots in Leather-lane. No, Matt knew better; and if he could not get the prime article, he would content himself with a penny loaf and two ounces of single Glo'ster. No one could get such scraps from the butcher's as Matt; and if any one of his acquaintance wanted a pound or two, it was almost worth their while to ask the old man to dinner, for the sake of getting him to undertake the commission. For did not the old fox always go into the Lane by Lincoln's-inn, where such a trade was done in chops that the butcher must have bought his sheep nearly all loin, and that, too, of the prime, for the legal gentlemen of the district were rather particular. As to distance, Matt never studied that when he was bent upon any delicacy, being ready to visit St. Martin's-lane for hot black-puddings, Leadenhall-market for cocks'-heads or giblets, Billingsgate for cockles or mussels; but all to oblige friends.

Now, although old Matt made great shifts over his dinners, he revelled in his tea; that is to say, his evening coffee—coffee-shop tea being a decoction, as the tea is carefully boiled to the extraction of all its strength, but to the destruction of all flavour, and Matt foolishly preferred the simple infusion of everyday life. So Matt enjoyed his evening coffee—a half-pint cup for a penny, and three large greasy slices of bread-and-butter for the same coin—the butter being always the best Dorset, slightly rank in the eating, and prepared by some peculiar Dutch process without the assistance of cows. Old Matt never missed his tea if his funds would at all hold out; for at this delectable coffee-house there were newspapers, and, better still, magazines of so tempting a nature that they often made the old man late back to his duties. The real enjoyment that he felt over his book must have flavoured the repast, for he always seemed to relish these meals immensely. Generally speaking, men

of his trade—haunters of his haunts—are rabid politicians; but not so Matt: missing a glance at the morning or evening paper never troubled him; but still there were times when the old printer took an interest in questions current; and if “the poor man” happened to be on the *tapis*, Matt digested the leading articles most carefully.

But no one knew where Matt slept, and many a job he lost in consequence; though this he set down to the score of his ill-luck. And yet he need not have been so nervous about any one tracking him to his den; for Lower Serle’s-place was once the resort of many of the choice spirits of a bygone age: lordly gallants strutted there in the showy costumes of their day; here, too, was the famous Kit-cat Club; but the glory had departed when Matt chose the court for his resting-place: where the wits made their rendezvous, were misery and dirt, frouzy rotting tenements, vice and disease. Trade was in the place, but in its lowest and least attractive forms; for there might be bought “half-hundreds” of coals in little sacks; ginger-beer; great spongy-shelled oysters, opened by dirty women, ready to place a discoloured thumb upon the loosened bivalve, and to rinse it in the muddy tub from which it was fished; fruit, too, in its seasons; potatoes and greens always; mussels, farthing balls of cotton, brass thimbles, comic songs, and sweets. But the two most flourishing trades here were those of translating, and dealing in marine stores—businesses carried on next door to one another by Isaac Gross and Mrs. Slagg. And a busy shop was Mrs. Slagg’s—a shop where, in place of the customary gibbeted black doll, hung a painted and lettered huge bladebone that might, from its size, have belonged to the celebrated vastotherium itself, only that it was composed of wood, carved in his leisure hours with a shoemaker’s knife, as a delicate attention to Mrs. Slagg, by her neighbour, Isaac Gross. Gay was Mrs. Slagg’s shop with gaudily-illustrated placards, touching the wealth, ease, and comfort to be obtained by carrying all the worn apparel, rags, bones, and old iron to Slagg’s; serving-maids were walking out in the gayest of dresses bought with kitchen-stuff; men were fitting on impossible tail-coats and solid-looking hats, bought with old iron, brass, and pewter; while the demand for white and coloured rags, waste-paper, bones, and horse-hair, appeared insatiable; and to obtain them, it seemed that Mrs. Slagg was ready to ruin herself outright by giving unheard-of prices. A wonderfully heterogeneous collection was here of the odds and ends of civilization: one pane of the window resembled the foul comb of some mammoth bee, filled up as it was with bottles presenting their ends to the spectator, who shuddered as he thought of the labels that once decked those vials, such as “The draught at bedtime,” “The mixture as before,” “A tablespoonful every two hours,” &c.; while many a wild and fevered dream that shudder brought back, of nights followed by days of pain and misery, aching heads, watching, anxious faces, sleek doctors of the Hardon class, wondering thoughts of the future, and of past hours unappreciated, unvalued. Every medicine bottle in Mrs. Slagg’s shop was a very telescope, which, if applied to the eye, presented such a

diorama of sickness and sorrow as caused sensations as of grits getting into the cogs of the wheels of life, and staying their would-be even course. Mrs. Slagg’s was an obtrusive shop, irrespective of the flaming placards that literally shouted at you, and the black board, painted in old-bony skeleton letters with the legend, “Keziah Slagg, Dealer in Marine Stores,” though the terrene ruled to the exclusion of the marine. In its way, it was in everybody’s way, and seemed to have taken the disease rampant in the region of Lowther Arcadia—“a breaking out”—in this case a hideous leprosy of loathsome objects, that would have at you, catching skirt or umbrella, or being run over after they had been kicked in the way by racing children. The shop was gorged, and its contents oozed out, ran over, and trickled down the steps into the cellar, which was also full and repulsive, sending foul fungoid growths up through the trap to the pavement, and also apparently dipping under where the traffic lay to force its way up on the other side, where the growth spread again along the wall, so that passengers had to run the gauntlet on their journey to and from Temple Bar. In fact, Mrs. Slagg’s shop was a very refiner’s furnace for old refuse, which boiled and bubbled over into court and cellar, as we have seen; while in front of the shop of Mr. Isaac Gross extended trays of old iron, bundles of white and coloured rags, odorous bones, crippled tools, wormy screws, screws without worms, odds and ends, odds without ends, and ends that seemed at odds with the world, and tried to trip it up as it went by.

Watching over her treasures would sit Mrs. Slagg, just inside her door, stout, happy, and dirty, in a bower of old garments, which waved in every passing breeze; and, saving when clients came to obtain the unheard-of prices for the rags and metal, and the bones and grease, upon which this ogress lived, Mrs. Slagg’s time was divided between shouting, “You bring that ere back!” to the children, and playing “Bo-peep” with Mr. Isaac Gross, who, also working just inside his shop, would lean out occasionally to look at Mrs. Slagg; though it took upon an average about nine peeps before both peeped together, when Mrs. Slagg would nod and smile at Mr. Gross, and Mr. Gross would nod and smile at Mrs. Slagg; and then work would be resumed, while it was understood in the court that something was to come of it.

But, beyond what has been described, there was another fact which pointed towards something coming of the neighbours’ intimacy; for Mrs. Slagg’s cellar being, as she termed it, “chock!” a portion of her stock-in-trade had worked its way into Mr. Gross’s back-parlour, and there stood in the shape of a large heap of waste paper—a heap that Mr. Gross would look at occasionally, and then smile in a very slow, heavy manner, as if smiling was a difficult task, and took time, for fear it should be broken if hastily performed, and become a laugh.

And a nice spot was Lower Serle’s-place! Like Bennett’s-rents, it seemed as if every house was a school, and it was always leaving-time; for if, for a short cut, you hazarded a walk through the court, you were attacked by hordes of little savages, who

pegged at you with tops, ran hoops between your legs, yelled in your ears, knocked tipcats in your eyes, kicked your shins at hop-scotch, drove shuttlecocks upon your hat, lassoed you with skipping-ropes, and, forming rings around, apostrophized you in tuneful, metrical language.

No doubt old Matt was used to all this, and so enjoyed a second nature; for be it known that he lodged with Mr. Isaac Gross, boot and shoemaker, in Lower Serle's-place, otherwise Rogue's, otherwise Shire-lane.

Matt's landlord was a big bachelor of six-and-thirty, with much more body than he seemed to have muscles to control, the effect being that he was slow—Mrs. Slagg said, "And sure," which is doubtful. Mr. Gross had round high shoulders, and more hair than he knew what to do with, or he would have had it cut; but he did not—only oiled it, brushed it down straightly, parted it in the middle, and then stopped it from falling down over his eyes when at work by confining it with a band of black ribbon crossing his forehead and tied behind—the effect altogether, when taken in conjunction with his fat, heavy, sparsely-bearded face, being decidedly pleasing, judging by Mrs. Slagg's standard. He was not a dirty man, but he never by any chance looked clean, on account of a peculiar tinge in his skin, due perhaps to his trade, the short pipe in his mouth from morn till night, and the salubrious air of the court. Mr. Gross was a doctor in his way, buying boots and shoes in the last stage of consumption, and then, by a grafting, splicing, and budding process, with the sounder portions of many he produced a few wearable articles, which, blacked to the highest pitch of lustre, shone upon his board to tempt purchasers from those who could not afford the new article. You might buy a pair of boots from Isaac whose component parts were the work, perhaps, of the cordwainers of many lands, which scraps he would build up again as if they were so many bricks, or perhaps mere bats, rough with mortar; and in this way Isaac Gross lived and flourished.

It was from first wearing his boots that old Matt came to lodge with Isaac Gross, sharing with him the back parlour, turned for their accommodation into a double-bedded room without bedsteads; but of itself a pleasant grove, whose fruitful sides teemed with boots and shoes in every stage of decay and remanufacture, hung upon nails wherever a nail would hold, the window-frame and its cross-bars not being spared. As to the large and ever-increasing pile of waste paper owned by Mrs. Slagg, old Matt resisted the encroachment with some bitterness; but still it grew, and though the old man grumbled, he would not move, for he liked his abode for its freedom from all restraint, since he could go to bed when he liked, stay as long as he liked, and use his own discretion respecting the removal of boots or other articles of clothing. The place was dirty, but that he did not mind; odorous, but then it was the true cherry twang; but what suited Matt best was, that his landlord troubled him little about rent, leaving him to pay when so minded, and never hinting at arrears; while still another advantage was that, next to a lamp-post, old Matt found his landlord the most

satisfactory listener he knew, one ready to be talked to upon any subject, and to fall into the talker's way of thinking.

On the morning when the words at the head of this chapter were spoken, in spite of the hammering, Matt continued to sleep on until nearly eight, when he rose, had his boots polished at half-price in the shade of Temple Bar, and then walked to the barber's, declaring a brushing to be the finest thing in the world for corns. Here he had an easy shave and a wash for a penny; breakfasted heartily and sumptuously, to the surprise of *habitués* and waitress, by calling for a rasher of bacon, and having a crumpled, greasy, brown dog's-eat brought him to devour with his bread and butter and coffee. For Matt was in high spirits: he was in full work upon a newspaper for a few days, and he had discovered the paragraph which, in spite of the drawback of its terrible contents, was a piece of news that should give Mr. Septimus Hardon the income and position "of what I always said he was, sir—a gentleman." So old Matt breakfasted, as he said, "like a prince," for fivepence, spent the change of his sixpence in a morning paper, and walked back to his lodging to read it at leisure, for his work would not begin till the afternoon.

Mr. Isaac Gross had finished his economical bachelor breakfast, consisting of bread and butter and packet-cocoa, combining cheapness, succulence, and convenience. The breakfast things were cleared away—not a long task—and Isaac was about to add a pile of old account books to the waste paper heap in the back-room.

"She bring them in?" said Matt.

Isaac, with his pipe in his mouth, nodded, and said in a gruff, slow growl—

"Waste paper."

"So it seems," said Matt, opening one or two of the books, and then closing them with an air of disgust, when his landlord took them up, added them to the heap, and, before returning to his bench, had a peep out towards Mrs. Slagg's.

But evidently the look was wasted, for he sighed, and took up his stirrup-leather, while old Matt drew down his mouth and bestowed a grim, contemptuous smile upon him as he rustled his paper, and, sitting down on a low workman's bench, began to read.

"Ah!" said Matt, stopping in his reading to refresh himself with a pinch of snuff from a pill-box, "I thought so. They had an adjourned inquest about that case I told you of; but there's only a short par. here."

"Umph!" ejaculated Isaac, taking a good pull at his wax-end, and then readjusting his boot in the stirrup, but directly after disarranging it, to take a peep at Mrs. Slagg—this time with success; but he frowned at her—a telegram that she knew meant the lodger was at home, and that friendly communications must stop.

"They've brought it in—"

"Aint seen my wax, have you?" said Isaac, slowly.

"Accidental death," said Matt, not noticing the interruption; "and it's my opinion that—What?"

"I want my wax," said Isaac, hunting about.

"Well, get it," growled Matt, rather annoyed at being interrupted.

"Aint seen it, have you?" said Isaac.

"No!" growled the old man, turning over his paper.

"Had it along with the duboin just before breakfast," said Isaac.

"And then," continued Matt, "the coroner gave his order for the burial, and—"

But Isaac Gross, who, in his slow fashion, was as industrious as the bees, like them, could not get on without his wax, so he interrupted the speaker with, "I want my wax," as he routed among his tools for the missing necessary.

"You're waxing a great nuisance, Ike," said Matt, "and I wish you'd find your wax;" and then he re-adjusted his spectacles, and had another pinch of snuff. "Hallo!" he growled, starting up and going to the door to speak to a woman who stood there, and who eagerly whispered a few words as she passed a note and a shilling into his hand. "Yes; I'll take the note, but I don't want that," he said, refusing the shilling, which fell upon the door-step. "Now, look here," he said, aloud, and very gruffly—for the woman had already turned to go—"I don't like this business at all; but if I'm to do it, I don't want paying for it; and if you don't take back that money, I sha'n't take the letter."

"Hush, pray!" whispered the woman, glancing at Isaac's round wide-open eyes. "Don't be angry with me, please—don't speak so loud."

The appealing voice somewhat softened the old man, but he kept on growling and muttering, as, after a few more words, the woman—the same who had visited the Jarkers—picked up the shilling and left him, watched all the while most eagerly by Mrs. Slagg, who did not seem to be easy in her mind respecting female visitors to her neighbour's place of business.

"It won't do, it won't do," muttered the old man, taking his seat after glancing at the note. "I don't like it. Well," he said aloud, "have you found that wax?"

"It was in my pocket," said Isaac, slowly and seriously pointing to the discovered necessary covered with bread crumbs, tobacco dust, and flue.

"Now then, let's have a bit more news," said Matt, once more settling himself.

"Aint there a murder nowheres?" said Isaac, whose work was now progressing.

"No, there aint!" said Matt, gruffly. "Nice taste you've got; but here's two fires—p'r'aps they'll do for you?"

"Ah," said Isaac, slowly, "let's have them."

But again, to Matt's annoyance, further progress was stayed by the entrance of a man to dispose of three pairs of old boots.

Old Matt crumpled up his paper and put it away in disgust.

As soon as the man had taken his departure, the old man began to examine the boots.

"Ah," he said, "nice trade yours—three pair of decent boots for three shillings; and then you'll touch them up and sell them for five shillings a pair. Tell you what—I'll give you a shilling and my old ones for this pair."

"Why, you can't wear 'em till they're mended," said Isaac.

"Can't I?" replied Matt, with a grim smile; "I can wear these, old fellow, which are a deal worse."

And he placed one of his old ones on the bench.

This was unanswerable, so Isaac only smoked.

"Try which pair fits you best," he said at last, "and I'll do them up a little bit for another shilling."

"No book-cover soles," said Matt, pointing with his thumb over his shoulder at the heap in the back room.

Isaac grinned after his slow fashion, and then growled—

"Fust-class leather and good workmanship."

"For two shillings?" said Matt.

"And the old ones," said Isaac.

"Why, they're worth nothing to you," said Matt.

"And they aint worth nothing to you," said Isaac.

"S'pose I'm going out to dinner, and want a change?" said the old man, with a grin.

"Nother shilling, then," said Isaac, determinedly.

"Why, they aint worth sixpence!" exclaimed Matt, indignantly.

"Not to you," said Isaac, slowly.

"No, nor you, nor anybody, except the owner," said Matt.

"Which is it to be?" said Isaac, in intervals between drawing home stitches. "Two bob and the old uns, or three bob wi'out?"

"Done up?" said Matt.

"Done up," said Isaac.

"With new leather?" said Matt.

"With fust-class, well-seasoned leather," said Isaac, cutting off his wax-ends.

"Take 'em at two, then," said Matt, rising; "and I'll tell you what it is, Ike, I put up with your smoke and your courting, but if you don't make an end of choking me up with your confounded waste paper, I'll move, Ike—I'll move."

Isaac Gross smiled, faster this time, for he took his pipe out of his mouth to allow the smile to break into a grin. He then had a peep at Mrs. Slagg, who was on the watch, having seen Matt outside; and then, as the old man made his way through the impedimenta of Lower Serle's-place, turning the note he had received over and over in his hand, and muttering as he went, Isaac's hammer went on "tap, tap, tap," till he was out of hearing.

CHAPTER XX.—HOME.

SOFTLY along the dark passages of the County Arms stole Septimus Hardon, and with stealthy hand he loosened bar and bolt, till the front-door yielded to his touch, and he stood in the grey dawn of the morning, looking round the market-place for a few minutes before making his way along a road not travelled by him for years.

How familiar every spot seemed as he left the town behind!—spots dimly seen as yet, but familiar enough to cause a swelling sensation at his heart, and tears to rise unbidden to his eyes. Now he stopped to gaze upon some old half-forgotten scene; now to listen to the morning hymn rising from the wood upon his left—loud and high notes from thrush and finch, mingled with starling's mocking whistle, the mellow flute-tones of the blackbird, and the incessant

sant caw of the rooks. All around seemed so peaceful, so utter a change from the miseries of a close London court, that his thoughts went back from the present to the old days of his boyhood, and for a while a sense of elation coursed through his veins, his eyes sparkled, and he gazed round with delight till they rested upon the spire of the old church, when a chill fell upon his spirits once more, as he remembered the funeral and the miseries of the present. Then, for the hundredth time, he recalled his father's lonely and fearful end—passing away without a word of forgiveness; his own return as a beggar to his old home, without a right therein—to be met as it were upon the threshold, and to be told that he was an intruder who could be admitted only upon sufferance. But he would enter, he said, if only to ask of the dead to give him a sign respecting the truth of his uncle's words.

Septimus Hardon's brow furrowed, and he walked on hastily; then he fell back into his listless, dreary way. It was very early, or his gesticulations would have excited attention; but he met no one, and once more hurrying on, he at last stood before the clump of trees within whose shades was the gloomy moss-grown house where so large a portion of his life had been spent. He passed through the rusty iron gate, which creaked mournfully, and then stood before the old place, which looked more gloomy, moss-grown, and damp than ever. Desolation everywhere; for when the son left his home, the father had shut himself up, discharging the gardener and all the indoor servants but the one who filled the post of housekeeper. The vine still hung to the large trellis-work, but here and there, tangled with ivy, it had fallen away, and lay across the path; the windows were dim, the paths overgrown with weeds; while between the door-steps the withered herbage that had grown up the previous year rustled in the breeze of the early spring. Over such windows as yet possessed them, yellow time-stained blinds were drawn, while here and there upon the ground-floor the shutters were closed, or half-closed over some broken pane. Old sparrows' nests were in the spouts and beneath the eaves, where long strands of hay, mingled with half-rotten feathers, blew about. One long piece of guttering had fallen from its support, and hung so that, in rainy seasons, the wet streamed down upon one of the window-sills, whose woodwork was green and rotted away, and everywhere the walls were mossy and damp-stained.

The place might have had upon it the legal seal, and been in Chancery, for there was not a sign amidst the dreary desolation to indicate that it had been inhabited for years; and as Septimus stood there, associating the gloomy place with the borders of the shades he had so lately quitted, it was with a cold hand seeming to clutch his heart. Bitter, staring desolation everywhere, and all in keeping with the wretchedness within his breast; for he knew that behind those walls, perhaps behind the very window that faced him, there was one lying cold and still, staring blankly upwards, in spite of hand-closed eyelids, straight up towards heaven and futurity. And he had died alone in this desolate house, without even a servant by him. Septimus Hardon shuddered as he recalled all that had fol-

lowed, while, pushing his way through the wet shrubs, he went round to the other side of the house.

Desolation everywhere; as there was death in the house, so there seemed to be the traces of the cold shade all around. The once smooth lawn ragged and tangled with the dead grass and weeds of other years; the gravel-walks almost obliterated; the rustic flower-vases covered with green moss, broken down and rotting away; the long flower-stand that he recollected as his mother's pride, lying in broken, sodden fragments beneath the drawing-room window; and the little greenhouse a wreck of broken glass and stained wood-work. While here again were broken windows, half-closed shutters, and drawn-down, torn, and yellow blinds. Everywhere neglect and ruin, so sad, so mournful, that Septimus sat down upon one of the broken vases, covered his face with his hands, and groaned for the irrevocable past.

But now once again came the thought of the dead, and, slowly rising from his seat, the stranger stood wondering in which room his father lay. A moment's thought told him that he would have been removed from the bed-room where the horrible discovery was made; and Septimus looked along the house till his eye rested upon one blind-drawn window, whose sash was lowered a few inches from the top, where the yellow blind, torn a little at one corner from the roller, fluttered softly in the morning breeze.

The heart of Septimus Hardon told him that it must be here—here in his own old bed-room that his father had been laid—in the room where, as a boy, he the son had slept—where the mother long passed away, and the father now dead, had so regularly, night by night, come to stand at his bedside for a minute or two before seeking their own.

Lying there, and no one stirring about the place to admit him! It was doubtful even whether a living soul was in the house, for all was closed, and he had not seen a trace of life. He must see the dead, if only for a moment, and he could reach the window-sill from the low, ivy-covered wall, thrust up the sash, hold back the blind, and then climb in, and—and—and what?

Septimus Hardon in spirit asked himself again and again that question; and at last, in slow, measured tones, he whispered—

"Stand face to face with the dead!"

He shuddered, as once more that cold, stern face seemed to stand out before him, reproaching him for disobedience, and asserting its paternal right of control; till slowly, and like a thief, Septimus Hardon clutched the ivy, wet with dew, and glistening in the morning sun, climbed upon the wall, and then stood up and tried to raise the sash. But it resisted his efforts for a while, and then gave way so suddenly, that before he could recover himself his hand slipped through a pane of glass, which shattered and fell with a musical tinkle inside the chamber, while the intruding hand was cut, and bled profusely.

He bound his handkerchief tightly round his bleeding hand, and then stood trembling, the perspiration in large drops upon his forehead, as the blind slowly flapped to and fro, and the lath rapped

in a ghostly way upon the framework of the window.

For a few minutes Septimus Hardon stopped, leaning against the window-sill, trembling and undecided, till, mustering his strength of mind and body, he slowly drew himself up, climbed within the room, and then, as the blind fell back to its place, stood in the presence of the dead, listening to the "rap-rap" of the blind-lath against the window-frame, and a sharp vicious gnawing that proceeded from behind the wainscot of the old house, and all the while not daring to turn his eyes in the direction of the bed whose position he knew so well, and upon which he could feel that the coffin was resting.

Gnaw, gnaw; tear, tear; sharp little teeth savagely working at the thin hard wood, and evidently making rapid progress towards their goal.

The sound was hideous, and the sweat dropped from Septimus Hardon's forehead with a tiny plash upon the bare boards, where he could see more than one little star-like mark; and then, rousing himself, he ran towards the spot from whence the noise proceeded, and kicked furiously at the wainscot, when there was a scuffling noise, followed by a deep stillness, broken only at intervals by the gentle rapping of the blind-lath upon the window-frame.

And there stood the careworn man in his own old room—the old plainly-furnished room that he might have slept in but the previous night, so unaltered was everything, as, with eyes putting off that which he had come to see until the very last, he gazed around. There were the quaint old black-framed prints of Hudibras, whose strange, uncouth figures had frightened him as a boy—figures that, in the half-lights of evening or early morn, he had looked upon until they had seemed to stand forth from the frames as he lay quaking with childish terror; there was the old wall-paper, in whose pattern he had been wont to trace grotesque faces; there again the marbled ceiling, whose blue veins he had been used to follow in their maze-like wanderings, when he lay fevered and wakeful with some childish ailment; the same strips of lean-looking striped carpet; the same old hook in the beam, round which the flies darted and circled in summer; the same rickety corner washstand, with its cracked ewer, and quaint water-bottle and glass, which tinkled when a foot-step passed along the passage; the fire-board, which blew down on windy nights, and almost frightened him into a fit, while there it was, even now, half-fallen and leaning against a chair, with a faint dust of the old fine soot, just as it used to be, scattered upon the hearthstone; the same drawers, whose old jingling brass knobs caught in his pinafore, and held him that dark night when he let fall the candle, and stood screaming for help; the same shells upon the chimney-piece—shells that of old he had held to his ear to listen to the roaring sea; even the old rush-light shade—big, and pierced with holes—was there, the old shade that used to stand upon the floor in the wash-hand basin, and throw its great hole-pierced shadow all over ceiling and wall, while each hole formed a glaring eye to stare at him and frighten away sleep.

Familiar sights that made him disbelieve in the lapse of time, and think it impossible that he could

be standing there an elderly man; for all his association with the room seemed those first-formed impressions of childhood. But he cast away the dreamy, musing fit; for he felt that he had driven it to the last, and he must look now. Yes; there was his old bed, with the great black-cloth coffin, nearly covered by its lid, now drawn down a little from the head.

"Tap-tap, tap-tap," went the blind-lath; while outside shone the sun, and through the open window came the cheery twitter of the birds. Within the room Septimus Hardon could hear the heavy beating of his own heart. Then again, close behind him, came the sound of hurried scuffling beyond the wainscot; then a shrill squealing; and, directly after, the loud, sharp tearing of hungry teeth, gnaw, gnaw, gnaw, incessantly, for the scared rats had again returned to the charge.

Septimus Hardon roused himself from his stupor, and kicked angrily at the wainscot, and once again he heard the hurrying rush of the hunger-driven little animals as they fled, and a shuddering sensation ran through his veins as he recalled the past.

And now he nerved himself to approach the bed, and stretched out his hand to remove the coffin-lid; but for some time he stood with his hands resting upon it. A dread had overshadowed him that he was about to gaze upon something too hideous for human eyes to bear; but at last he thrust the covering aside, and it fell upon the bed, when, with swimming head, he clung to the bedstead for a few minutes to save himself from falling. But the tremor passed off, for he was once more roused by the indefatigable gnawing of the rats; and he asked himself how long it would be before they would work their way through the thin oaken panel, and then whether they would attack the coffin.

Gnaw, gnaw, gnaw, incessantly, till he once more angrily struck at the wall, when the noise ceased. And now Septimus Hardon strode firmly up to the bedside and gazed upon his father's face, not hideously disfigured, or frightful to look upon, but pale, calm, stern, with the brow slightly contracted, and, seen there in the twilight of that shaded room, apparently sleeping.

Dead—not sleeping. Gone from him without a word, without a sign, of forgiveness; leaving him a beggar, with a name that was fouled and stained for ever in the sight of men. Gone—taking with him a secret of such vital importance. But Septimus Hardon thought not now of all this, for his memory was back amidst those early days when his mother was living, and his father would relax from his stern fits, so that for a while happiness seemed to dwell within their home. Then came the recollection of his mother's death, and the cold indifference into which his father had sunk. Then again all the sorrows and pain were forgotten, and the old man's virtues shone forth, as his shabby, travel-stained son sank upon his knees by the coffin and buried his face in his hands.

The sun streamed through the loose corner of the blind, and shone like a golden bar-sinister across the kneeling man; the sparrows twittered in the eaves, and ever upon the window-frame the blind kept up



"CLIMBED WITHIN THE ROOM."—(Page 118.)

its monotonous tap, tap, tap, at regular intervals, while at times a puff of light air made it shiver and shudder from top to bottom. But, above all, came from behind the wainscot the incessant gnaw, gnaw, gnaw, as though the rats knew that their time was short, and that their prey would soon be beyond their reach: gnaw, gnaw, gnaw, as though splintering off large pieces of the woodwork, while now no angrily-stricken blow scared them off; gnaw, gnaw, gnaw, until little ragged splinters and chips began to be thrust out beneath the skirting-board; then more, and more, and more, till a tiny, light heap, that a breath would have scattered, appeared close to a ragged hole. Then heap and hole grew larger, and as the noise increased a sharp nose was seen moving quickly, as a rat worked vigorously, till, as it obtained room to tear away at the board, the heap grew bigger, fragments were thrust out hastily into the room, and at last the little archway afforded space for the passage of the worker, a sharp-eyed, keen-looking, little animal, which, after peering about eagerly for a few moments, darted into the room, darted back again, and then renewed its attack upon the skirting-board until the hole was enlarged.

Then for a while all was silent, but a keen observer might have detected within the darkness the sharp nose of the rat, and the eager glint of its watching orbs. Then came a faint rustle, and the rat seemed to glide out into the room; then another head appeared at the hole, and another lean, vicious animal was out, but a louder tap than usual from the blind sent them darting back to their lair.

Another five minutes, and they were out again—one, two, three; another, and another, and another—a swarm of rats, savage with hunger; but now the loud, chirruping squabble of a pair of sparrows which settled on the window-sill scared the little animals once more, and they fled in haste to their corner.

Out again, for all was silent; first one peering into the room, with its black, bead-like eyes scanning the place, then darting back at some false alarm, but out again directly, followed by its fellows, till there was a swarm once more, now running a few feet, now darting back to the hole; and still Septimus Hardon knelt, as he had knelt for hours, motionless beside his father's coffin.

The golden bar shone into and across the room, a bar-sinister no longer, for it played upon the features of the dead, seeming to illumine them with a smile; the sparrows twittered in the eaves, the faint whistle of a carter, cheering his way with some old minor strain, was heard from the road; the blind still tapped softly and shuddered from top to bottom; but the gnawing sounds from the skirting-board had ceased, and the kneeling man remained motionless by the bedside.

Tap, tap, tap, in a strange, warning way, as the shuddering motion of the old blind continued. Warning taps, as if softly made by unseen watchers—signals to rouse the kneeling figure whose face was buried in his hands, and whose worn, lean fingers touched the black cloth of the coffin; taps that now grew louder, for there was a faint, scratching noise, as of little vicious claws passing over a counterpane.

Cyprus One Hundred Years Ago.

THE following are the impressions of a traveller who wrote his opinions of our new acquisition in the year 1776—words that are of great interest at the present moment:—

"There is nothing in travelling that amuses one more than the customs of a new country, when they differ from what one has seen or been used to in one's own. I was much struck with a compliment of an extraordinary kind—and which had in it much the air of antiquity—that was paid us during our stay in the village above-mentioned. We were no sooner retired to the place where we were to sleep than the papas, or priest, entered the room, followed by near a dozen women, who immediately seated themselves on the floor in the eastern manner till we were undressed and got into bed, when they began to dance in pairs, to a kind of pipe which was played upon by a boy, not in an ungraceful manner; after which, wishing us a good night, they retired. This I understood from our guide was intended as a compliment, and which they always pay to strangers. I have since slept in many different villages in the island, but this was the only place in which I had this compliment paid me. Whether it is a custom peculiar to some particular villages only, or that they did not think us of consequence sufficient in the other places for such an honour, I don't know, but I believe it is not universal over the whole island.

"The people of Cyprus are by no means of a bad disposition, and one travels with the greatest safety. They are extremely superstitious, and believe in all kinds of charms and witchcraft. There is not a house or even a field that has not its good and evil genius, and they are taught to believe that the former is more or less ready to protect it against the latter, according to the good or bad manner of life of the owner of it. The views with which these notions have been inculcated into an ignorant, credulous people are evident, and the effects produced by them are by no means bad.

"Now I am upon this subject, I must not omit relating to you what, not having been an eye-witness of, I do not affirm for true; but after having been assured of the truths of it by persons of most undoubted veracity, I can't say I positively disbelieve it—this is the cure of the bite of the asp by sympathy. Cyprus is much infested by this terrible animal, for whose poison they have no medicinal cure; and if the person bit happens to be out of reach of the person who has the power (for application must be made to him within twenty-four hours, and the secret is known to only one family), he most infallibly dies. The wounded person goes immediately to bed, and one of his friends is despatched to the person who is to cure him. When he arrives, he stops him at the threshold of his door, and, taking the earth that happens to be on each side his feet where he stands, he puts it into a glass of water, and gives it to the man to drink, when the patient gradually grows better till he quite recovers.

"The power of charming serpents is known to many people in Egypt, and likewise in Cyprus. My curiosity to be an eye-witness of so extraordinary a

thing as that of catching and handling the most venomous serpents without receiving any harm from them, induced me to go to the house of one of these men, to see him perform what appeared to me almost incredible. The man made no difficulty in going immediately to find one, which he had no sooner done than he took it very quietly up in his hand, as it lay sleeping in the sun; the animal struggled much to disengage itself, but never offered to bite him, though he had it in his power. I could not observe that he had any ointment or anything rubbed over his hand that might have produced a stupor in the animal, and have deprived it for a time of the power of biting; but, on the contrary, it appeared to be perfectly itself, and endeavoured in the best manner it could to regain its liberty. There is one circumstance I was told, which is, that these people who have this art never kill the animals when they catch them, but always give them to another person to do it. The asp frequently grows to a great size. I have myself seen one near as large as my leg. They are a great nuisance to this island, and many places are so much infested by them that they are become quite uninhabited upon this account. I could relate to you many curious stories that I have been told upon the subject of charms and incantations, many of which are truly ridiculous."

Sir John's Preserves.

THE fire blazed cheerily on the hearth, and played on the faces of those seated around it in conversation. Now and then a brighter flame than the rest would shoot upwards, revealing the portraits looking out from the old gilt frames on the walls, and showing in strong relief the clear profile of a young girl of eighteen or nineteen, who sat, with bent head, listening to the low tones of a man several years older than herself. Beside these two, there were Sir John Chatwood, the owner of the old-fashioned country-house; his wife, Lady Chatwood; their son, Frank, and four guests invited down for a little shooting in the carefully kept preserves belonging to the estate.

Sir John was proud of his preserves, and constantly asked people through the winter to come for a little sport, which he joined in himself with as keen appreciation as he felt in his younger days; and his son brought down his college friends as often as he pleased. One of the latter was Allan Bentley, before mentioned as talking to the baronet's daughter; and though he had already been staying in the house longer than any of the other guests, he still lingered, acceding not unwillingly to Frank's entreaties that he would remain for just one more day after the hares. Frank knew very well that it was not the hope of a little more sport that kept his friend from his club and chambers in town, but he pretended to see nothing. But Allan had made up his mind that he really would quit them that week, in spite of remonstrances from the hospitable old gentleman who loved to have the house filled with guests. The other four were going on the next day but one, the morrow being the last day's sport for that season, as far as Chatwood Hall was concerned.

The conversation was pretty general, the sports-

men recalling anecdotes of their several experiences of bygone days, when, these being exhausted, there was a pause, which Lady Chatwood broke.

"I always suffer a great deal from nervousness during the season," she said, with a little shiver. "At first it is dreadful—I expect every day to see some one brought home half killed; but one gets used to it by degrees. I am so thankful it is at an end without any accidents having occurred."

"There is another day to come yet," said one of the guests. "I would not be in too great a hurry, if I were you, Lady Chatwood. Who knows what may happen to-morrow? Very likely we shall have an accident as a finish off."

Frank laughed.

"Now, that is too bad, Mr. Goodwin. My mother fidgets quite enough, without any one croaking about what may happen. Why, even Katie has turned quite pale."

"Nonsense, Frank," said the girl, laughing; "it is your fancy—the firelight deceives you."

As another remark drew the general attention from her, Bentley took her hand in his, and held it.

"You do not share your mother's fancies, do you, Kate?"

"I often feel when I see you start how easily an accident might happen. I am not sorry it is just over," she replied.

"I am," he said, meaningly; and his tone chased away the slight pallor from Kate's cheek.

A gust of wind came suddenly against the windows, which rattled noisily, as there was a sudden silence, so that the sighing moan of the trees outside was plainly heard.

"This kind of night makes one feel superstitious," said the girl. "I wish you were not going to-morrow. What time do you start in the morning?"

"About seven, I think."

"I shall be down to see you off. How the wind moans to-night!"

Later on in the evening Lady Chatwood drew Bentley on one side.

"Mr. Goodwin's words have made me feel almost frightened, Mr. Bentley. I shall be so glad when to-morrow is over, and you are all safe back again. You smile, as though my fears were absurd; but I know only too well what dreadful things have happened merely from a little carelessness. Promise me that you will be careful to-morrow, for Katie's sake."

"I will, certainly, if I can be more so than usual, Lady Chatwood; but I am not in the habit of carrying a loaded gun pointed at myself or at anybody else," he said, laughing. "The danger is almost *nil* amongst a party who have any common sense; for in my opinion it is only an idiot who carries firearms carelessly, out of bravado."

The next morning Kate kept her word, and was down, though her mother was not, to pour out the coffee for the sportsmen, looking fresh and sweet in her simple morning dress of holland, and evidently having forgotten the alarm of the previous night, now that the sun shone out brightly through the clouds, and the dismal moaning of the wind had ceased.

More than one looked admiringly at her pretty,

sparkling face, deciding mentally that Bentley was a lucky fellow to have won her.

Just as they were about to start, Lady Chatwood entered.

"Do you all care so much for this one day's sport?" she asked. "I almost hoped you would give it up."

"Why, Mary, what can you be thinking of? And now that we are all ready too!" exclaimed Sir John, rather impatiently. "Haven't you forgotten Goodwin's nonsense yet? It is childish, my dear girl," he continued, in a lower tone, as he approached her. "Your own common sense must tell you that there is no more danger to-day than on any other."

His wife looked up at him anxiously.

"I am very foolish, I know, dear. But pray take care of yourself, and get home as soon as you can."

So the party set off, Bentley lingering behind the rest to say farewell to Kate, who stood by her mother in the portico.

"Good-bye," said she, lightly. "Don't be any longer than usual, or mamma will be frightened."

"Sir John reckoned that we should be home about three."

"Perhaps I shall come to meet you," said Kate. "The others are waiting for you at the bottom of the hill, I see."

"Good-bye, darling, for the present," he whispered, and hurried after them, looking up when he had descended the hill on which the house stood to wave his hand, when the flutter of a white handkerchief showed that the action was seen.

The sport was good, and game plentiful. They were returning in good spirits, and laughing over the gloomy predictions of the night before, when Bentley, who had for the minute, in crossing a little turnip patch, become separated from the rest, saw two partridges rise from behind some bushes. He took aim and fired without an instant's hesitation, when one fell. As he ran to pick it up, a groan from behind the hedge made him start forward to ascertain the cause.

On the ground lay the form of a young girl, and his heart stood still with horror as he recognized the dress she wore. He hastened to raise her head, and found his fears realized, for it was Katie Chatwood.

She raised her eyes as he bent over her.

"Mamma was right," she said, faintly. "I think it has killed me, Allan."

For the moment he thought her words were true, as her head fell back, and her eyes closed in a swoon. He called for help loudly, and in an instant Frank was at his side.

"Bentley, what have you done?" he exclaimed, turning pale as ashes, as he saw the blood-stained dress and marble face of his sister.

"Killed her," groaned Bentley, as the others came up; and, lifting her in his arms, he carried her towards the house.

"What is it?" asked Sir John, who brought up the rear, somewhat out of breath, not being so light and active as of old.

"An accident, father," said the young man, hurrying to his side. "But don't be alarmed, it is only

a faint. It is nothing serious. I haven't heard how it happened yet."

"Who was hurt, then?" asked the old man, impressed by his son's face and manner, and beginning to tremble.

The rest of the party had left them behind, hurrying to Bentley's assistance, and Frank and Sir John were alone. The former hesitated, and then replied—

"It is Katie, father. Let us get home."

The old gentleman did not speak, but hastened on by his son's side.

At Chatwood Hall they found every one in consternation. Bentley had gone for the doctor, and Kate was still unconscious, in spite of her mother's efforts to restore her.

The visitors departed that same evening, feeling themselves in the way, Allan alone remaining.

For days Katie lay between life and death, while Allan felt himself the cause of all, and dared scarcely look at the pale, anxious faces of father, mother, and brother, lest he should read in them the reproaches that did not pass their lips. The sight of her almost drove him mad with the thought that his carelessness had caused her sufferings, and every moan that escaped her pale lips found an echo in his own heart.

"My dear boy," said Frank, one day, "I will not let you go into her room again. You can do no good, and you will only add to our troubles by being down with brain fever in a day or two. It was an accident, and, as no one blames you, you need not blame yourself."

But Frank's remonstrances were useless; and on the very day that Katie was declared out of danger his prediction was verified, and Allan's over-strained mental faculties gave way.

Kate recovered first, and, though pale and weak, insisted on helping to nurse him. She was sitting by his side when he opened his eyes one evening after the delirium had ceased, holding his hand in hers. He looked at her in some wonder at first, and then a mist came over his eyes.

"They told me you were better," he said, faintly; "but I hardly dared to believe it. Thank Heaven it is true."

It was some days after, when he was really stronger, that she was there again.

"Allan," she said softly, "do you know what you have been saying while you have been lying here?—that you had killed me, that you were the cause of all. You were mistaken; it was not your gun that did the mischief. No, don't speak; let me finish. Do you remember that morning? Frank took two guns with him—the new one he bought the other day, as well as his other. He found the two rather a bother to carry, and so placed one in a hollow tree you passed, thinking to take it out on his way back. I saw it there as I came to meet you, and feared some one might steal it, as I recognized it as Frank's; so I took it out and carried it with me. Then, when I came upon you, and saw you taking aim at almost where I stood, I started to get out of the way, and somehow or other it went off. You never noticed it lying beside me, but the others did, and took it for yours."

This was, in fact, the state of the case; and it had such an effect on Bentley that he quickly regained his strength. But Sir John, now that his grandchildren absorb his attention, ceases to take much interest in the preservation of his game.

The Crab.

BY A YOUNG PHILOSOPHER.

THIS wonderful freak of nature has been variously called by naturalists a fish and a vegetable, and possesses the advantage of being called which you please, proof of which is shown in the Latin, where, if you inquire within whether you may call a crab a fish, you find you can (can sir). Only very illiterate people spell crab with a k, but it is quite correct to eat it with a knife. Crabs grow on trees when the boys don't knock them off, and in holes in rocks where there are no boys. Some people have considered that the crab was the original apple which was bitten by Eve, and she, finding how nasty it was, handed it to Adam, who took his taste. This is very probable, for, to the present day, people who bite crabs generally prefer that the second bite should be made by some one else. The crab has not much tail, but it is sufficient to enable it to hang from a tree, and you may always know it by its stalk; but when you see crabs talk, they never speak. It is a singular fact that when a crab hangs on a tree its skin is called peel; but when it lives in a hole in a rock, a shell. Crabs cast their skins when they are pared, or else when they grow too tight. Hence from their peculiar habit they are called by naturalists "Moll husk us" because they husk or shell themselves. There are various kinds of crabs. There is the snub crab, generally given by a cross old woman; the Siberian crab, when a Russian gentleman is sent off amongst the snow; the carpenter crab, used for holding together boards which refuse to be married with nails; the public dinner crab, used for making lobster salad; the wood crab, for giving little boys internal pain; and the crab of crabs. This last is generally yellow and withered, adorned with corns and callosities, and is very acid, biting, and sharp. Crabs of this kind are common, and prove very indigestible at parties. The less young ladies have to do with them the better. The crab of the zodiac was for a long time a puzzle to astronomers; but they found him out at last. He was taken up in mistake for Pisces, the fishes, to the scales by Aquarius; stolen by Gemini, the twins, who were preserved from illness by Leo, who put in two saving claws or clauses, and told the twins to shell out. They did; but threw the crab to Virgo, the virgin, who caught it like an apple, thinking it would prove a man-trap—hence she was called Virgin—vir, a man, and gin, a snare or trap. The crab-tree flourishes best in the "School for Scandal," where it is found scattered amongst the leaves of a plant called Sheridan, by gas-light. The way to dress a crab is in oil, vinegar, and pepper. These clothes are hard to keep, so the custom is not to put them on, like jackets and trousers, but to open him, shake them up, and pop them in. The effect is very

warming, and answers to the story told of the countryman, who said he never wanted a great-coat when he could wrap up a beefsteak where it could digest.

That's all I know about crabs; only that it's a pity they should not be educated to draw teeth as well as set them on edge. Laughing gas might cry then, because the crab had wiped its eye.

A Midnight Ride.

"WHAT is it?"

"Open the door."

I started up and obeyed, throwing aside the book which had so interested me that I had not heeded the first impatient rapping at my bed-room door. Don Enrique, the friend at whose hacienda I was staying, faced me as I did so, his dark Spanish visage glowing with excitement.

"What has happened?" I asked. "Is the house on fire?"

"You have not been to bed?" he said, without answering my question. "That is fortunate. Get your gun quickly, and come down."

It is not my nature to hurry, unless under very extraordinary circumstances, and I had loaded my gun before donning the rough Tweed tunic I had thrown aside two hours ago, when the voice of my friend came up the stairs.

"Have you gone to sleep?"

"Coming," I responded.

Sticking a pistol in my belt, I then snatched up my gun and descended, to find him stamping about in a fume because I had kept him waiting, and holding two horses. As I appeared he mounted one, and I hastened to follow his example.

"Where are we off to? What is the meaning of this strange proceeding?"

"My black mare has been stolen, and, as I know the road the thief has taken, I want you to help me to catch him."

Without further explanation he set off at a gallop, I following, not unwilling to share in anything that looked like an adventure, a ride at midnight after a robber in a wild part of Chili being an entirely novel sensation.

I had gone to my room at ten that night, partly because it was the Don's custom to retire early, and partly because I was to leave him in the morning, and wished to start at five, or perhaps sooner. However, while undressing, my eye lit on a familiar title amongst a row of books on a couple of shelves hanging by the wall, and taking it from its fellows I was soon deeply immersed in the agonies of a French novel, well-known to me by reputation, though till then I had never had an opportunity to peruse it. Nearly two hours had slipped by without my knowledge, for as we left the village behind I heard the church clock peal forth the twelve strokes of midnight.

The moon had not yet succeeded in looking over the crest of the distant mountains, but there was a lightness about the clouds in that direction, which showed she might soon be expected to make her appearance. At present the night was very dark, and I, being unacquainted with the road, blindly

followed my companion as closely as possible, trusting to his knowledge of the place to keep us from galloping over a precipice, as I might have done without knowing it, the roads in this part being very dangerous. It must have been nearly half an hour after we started when he came to an abrupt halt on the top of a hill. Just then the moon became visible, and showed behind us the steep and rocky path by which we had come; before us a level plain, over which the road was continued till lost to view.

The light was sufficient to show us that no horseman was in advance of us, and for a minute Don Enrique was rather puzzled.

"He could not possibly be so far in front?" he said, directly. "He must have turned out of the path some little distance back, to take a different route. Will you do me a favour?"

"Certainly," said I. "What can I do?"

"Thanks. Very well, go straight on till you come to where there is a turning to the left, which you must take. This will lead you to another road, up which he will come. Whatever you do, lose no time, or we shall miss him yet. If you meet our friend, stop him, and I shall not be far off you may depend."

"He may be armed," said I, "and put a bullet into me."

"Don't give him the chance. If he threatens you, shoot him dead. Have no mercy on him."

"I have no ambition to be tried for manslaughter at the nearest town."

"Don't be afraid. If you kill him, I will say I did it."

And before I could say more he had put spurs to his horse, and galloped back at full speed down the hill.

Inwardly determining not to take his advice with regard to the horse-stealer, but to trust to my fists, I urged on my steed across the plain at a pace that would have astonished the Don could he have seen me.

The first turning to the left was nearly half a mile farther on, and I seemed a long time reaching the road Don Enrique had mentioned; but at last I pulled up, and, turning my horse's head in the direction from which the thief might be expected, waited for his arrival with impatience. I sincerely hoped that my friend would not be fleet enough, and that I should have to encounter him alone. This road was very rugged, being just where the mountains bordered the plain; and, as it presented such bad footing for the animal I rode, I thought it best to remain where I was. It was impossible for either pursuer or pursued to get over the ground quickly, and any attempt to do so would assuredly result in broken bones to the rider, or broken knees to the horse.

The moonlight was now brilliant, and showed the wild beauty of the scene in a strange, weird way that was highly impressive to any one not familiar with the place from childhood. On my left was the open plain, having almost the appearance of being snow-covered in the silver light. On my right and before me rose the rocks, piled up together or scattered as though hurled to their present places by some giant hand. The shadows they

cast were of the deepest blackness, in strong relief against the lightness of those parts exposed to the moon's rays.

Lost in admiration, I endeavoured to photograph the scene on my mind, and had almost forgotten the robber, when the sound of a gun at a short distance dispelled the feeling of solemnity which had been creeping over me. The next minute I heard the sound of hoofs approaching, and was immediately on the alert, ready to spring upon the fugitive, and stop his career.

But my muscles were not destined to be exerted on this occasion; for, to my disgust, I soon saw that it was my Spanish friend who emerged from the shadows. He stared at me blankly.

"Where on earth is the horse?"

"Don't know," I said, shortly. "I ought to be the one to ask that. You fired, did you not?"

"But has he not passed you?"

"No, I have seen nothing of either horse or rider."

He gave vent to an exclamation of surprise.

"It is very strange. I could not have touched him, then; and he must be hiding, so that I have passed him. However, it would be impossible for him to leave the path without dismounting."

As I turned back with him, I thought how easy it would be for him to remain concealed behind one of the great masses of rock scattered everywhere. Our eyes, dazzled by the bright moonlight, might even peer into the shadow where he crouched without distinguishing anything.

"Stop," said I. "Had I not better remain here, so as to cut off his retreat should you again miss him? I shall hear if you fire, and will come to your assistance."

Don Enrique agreed at once to this proposition, rode back by himself among the rocks, and was soon lost to view.

For some time I remained motionless in the saddle, while a cloud came before the moon, and left the road in darkness. Every nerve was strained to catch the slightest sound; but for perhaps half an hour I heard nothing, and was forgetting my surroundings, and thinking of home, when I was startled back to the present again by a sudden report, and immediately afterwards heard my name called at some distance. At the same instant, the clouds passing over let the moon once more be seen, so that the path was plainly visible; and I galloped off to join my Spanish friend.

I found him placidly awaiting my arrival, with a cigar in his mouth, and holding his beloved black mare by his side, safe and sound, but snorting, and evidently uneasy in her mind.

"Where is the thief?" I inquired, not seeing any signs of him near. "You haven't killed the poor wretch, have you?"

"I have not," he answered coolly. "But look behind that rock."

I approached the place he indicated, and started back with a cry of horror, my horse trembling, and requiring all my energy to keep him from bolting. There, in the soft, silvery light, lay a man, motionless and apparently dead, with clenched hands and eyes turned up, while a streak of blood across his forehead showed darkly against the ghastly white-

ness of his skin. Beside him was extended a large puma, the lion of the Cordilleras.

"They are both dead, I am happy to say," remarked the Don, as I returned to his side. "When I arrived on the scene the beast was on the point of making his supper off our friend there, while I met my property making the best of her way towards us, in a terrible state of alarm. The shot you, no doubt, heard, was the one that prevented the puma from putting his designs into execution—his victim was already dead."

We returned to the hacienda, and placed the mare in her stall again, before setting off, in spite of the lateness of the hour, for the nearest town, to acquaint the authorities with the occurrence. The dead man turned out to be a notorious character, and Don Enrique received compliments on all sides for his prompt behaviour, which had resulted in riding the neighbourhood of so daring a thief.

Bicycling.

BY GERARD F. COBB, M.A.,

*President of the Cambridge University Bicycle Club
and Chairman of the Bicycle Union.*

SECOND ARTICLE.

IN my previous paper I endeavoured to represent the importance of bicycling and its claims to consideration. My object now is to point out the legislative steps which would seem to be necessary to ensure the safety of the public. It is only fair to remark at the outset that the alarmist notions entertained in some quarters on this subject are quite unwarranted. Whether from the novelty of the thing, or from current prejudice, it is quite certain that any the slightest accident on the roadway which has been due to a bicycle will be fully chronicled in the Press. I will therefore ask your readers to reckon up the number of such accidents they may have read of, say, during the past six months. Only three occur to me, and I doubt if any one will be able to bring this number up to a double figure. There are at this moment some 60,000 bicyclists; and when to the number of riders is added the consideration of the distance they ride, and the consequent multiplication of opportunities for such accidents, it must be admitted that the proportion hardly justifies the recent outcry. This remark is not made with any intention of advocating the leaving of matters as they are, but simply to clear the ground of unnecessary alarm or prejudice.

There are three other points in which the ordinary views of the non-bicycling public require readjustment, before they can be said to be in a position to give fair judgment on the matter. They either do not know or are apt to forget these three things:—(1.) That the bicyclist has the very strongest of all motives for avoiding any collision with anything or anybody—that, namely, of self-preservation; for he invariably runs the risk of doing himself far more serious injury than he is likely to do to others, to say nothing of the damage done to his machine. (2.) That the very silence of the bicycle, so loudly complained of, is in reality a source of the greatest safety to the public, as it enables the bicyclist to

detect from a distance the very slightest sound of wheel or footfall, and so to avoid collisions. This is found of special advantage at corners and crossings. (3.) That under all ordinary circumstances a bicyclist can pass as close to a person or vehicle (with perfect security to the one or the other) as if he were walking. I am not now speaking of overtaking persons, in which case a wide berth should always be given; but people are often heard to complain on meeting a bicycle (when both they and the bicyclist have full view of each other) that it passes so near them, and they will even speak of it as if they had a narrow escape of being run over. The public may rest assured that there is no more chance of their being run over under such circumstances than there would be of a train running over them when they were standing against a crossing gate or on a station platform. A bicycle can be steered to an inch on any ordinary road surface without the slightest probability of any deviation. If the road be rough, the bicyclist has his own all-sufficient reasons for leaving plenty of room between his machine and anything he may meet upon it, otherwise there is no reason for him to leave a greater distance in passing than one person gives another when walking on a footway—*i.e.*, room for his body, and no more.

Turning now to the real sources of accidents, they may be mainly reduced to three:—(1.) The timidity of horses; (2.) the erratic gyrations of learners; (3.) uncontrolled or wilfully reckless driving downhill, and general disregard of ordinary road rules. 1. The first cause cures itself, or rather dies a natural death. It diminishes as bicycling increases, and the number of accidents due to it bears an inverse ratio to the number of bicyclists. In neighbourhoods where bicycling made an early start, it is the greatest rarity in the world to find a horse shy at a bicycle. I can only recall having passed four such within a radius of thirty miles from Cambridge during the last two years, and these were probably horses that would shy at anything. In a very short time there will hardly be a district left in which a bicycle is not a tolerably familiar object, and as soon as this is the case it will be no more a source of danger in this respect than a pig, a mud-heap, or a telegraph-post, or the thousand and one other objects that some horses always will shy at. 2. The second cause is being rapidly removed by the establishment of proper learning-grounds, so that no bicyclist need venture on a frequented roadway until he is thoroughly master of his machine. 3. With regard to the third and by far the most frequent source of accidents, so far as it may have been hitherto due to want of proper control over the machine, it has now been entirely removed by recent mechanical improvements in brake-power. There are very few hills down which the bicyclist may not venture in perfect safety to himself and the public, if he will only use his brake and keep his feet on his treadles. For the inconsiderate recklessness of the few riders whose object would seem to be to bring the pastime into disrepute, let the law provide a remedy by all means, and the sooner the better. At present the bicycling community finds itself in this predicament. On the one hand we find local authorities (as at Birming-

ham, Liverpool, Coventry, and elsewhere) issuing byelaws, and country magistrates giving decisions on the supposition that a bicycle is a "carriage" amenable to existing road law; on the other (and mainly where the bicyclist seeks the protection of the law) we are ruled out of court on the very opposite ground that a bicycle is not a carriage. There is reason to fear that the best legal authorities will be found to uphold this latter view, and that it will be ultimately necessary to have an Act to settle the question, so as to subject the bicyclist both to the control and to the protection of ordinary road law. If only this be done, and the penalties against furious and dangerous driving or riding be strictly enforced, I think we shall soon hear no more of accidents due to this third cause.

There remain only a few points in which the public require to be protected from the thoughtlessness, or the ill-bred selfishness, of what we hope forms a very small portion of the bicycling community. They have all been long ago provided for in the rules for road riding, framed by the club of which I have the honour to be president. Similar rules have recently been issued by the Bicycle Union, and their essential features are almost universally observed by "club" men, and the better classes of the "unattached." But, unfortunately, all bicyclists are not amenable to the same regulations, nor sufficiently imbued with a proper spirit of consideration for others; and it has therefore been found necessary in the interests of the public to insert a clause in the Highways Bill now before Parliament empowering local authority "to regulate the use of bicycles on roads" under the sanction of the Local Government Board. The necessity for this last proviso is obvious, when it is considered that a bicyclist may often pass through from ten to twenty different local districts in a day, and any variations in the law would lead to extreme inconvenience, if not actual injustice. There must be some uniform type to which these local byelaws should more or less conform.

In dealing with this question, it is plain that some sort of *via media* must be taken, not so much between the views of the bicyclist and the public, as between those of different sections of the public themselves. Just at present the popular mind is almost exclusively occupied with devising a remedy against supposed dangers; if, however, certain suggestions emanating from this confined view of the case were adopted, there would soon be an outcry that the remedy had converted a comparatively imaginary nuisance into a real one. Even as it is, the friendly and unobtrusive warnings invariably given by the thoughtful bicyclist on overtaking foot passenger or vehicle on the roadway are not always welcome. Those of the public who have ascertained by experience that bicycles will not run over them, nor frighten their horses, are beginning to resent being rung at or spoken to, still more being whistled or shouted at; and had Sir George Jenkinson's most unnecessary proposal that these warnings should be given on meeting, as well as overtaking, been sanctioned, the nuisance to the public would have been intolerable; for though the approaching driver or foot passenger might be staring the bicyclist

full in the face, he would still be constrained to ring his bell, or blow his whistle, for fear the oncomer should prove, as many are, an enemy to bicycles, and have him up for a breach of the law in neglecting to sound his alarm. And the same remarks apply to cases of overtaking, where the person in front is obviously aware of the bicyclist's approach. To ring, or whistle, or even speak in such cases is not only clearly unnecessary, but would be naturally regarded as rude and obtrusive. What is wanted is a rule to insure warning of approach being given where necessary, and only where necessary, so as to minimise what would otherwise become a positive nuisance.

As these things can be so much better understood by practical illustration, I will just state what is my own practice, and that of most bicyclists in the matter of overtaking. In all cases of foot passengers, and the quieter kinds of vehicles, a raising of the voice in conversation with your companion, or a slight cough, if alone, is almost always sufficient to attract attention, without seeming to wish to attract it. If these fail, a bell or whistle is in the pocket, and can be instantly got at, and the warning given. I venture to think that a byelaw compelling every bicyclist to have either a bell or whistle with him, and to use the same before overtaking any foot passenger, horseman, or driver of a vehicle on the roadway, whose attention he may have failed to attract otherwise, would fully meet the case for ordinary roads. In the frequented streets of a town, a more continuous use of the bell might perhaps be enforced, though absolute continuity is not really necessary except in very crowded thoroughfares. It is far more important to regulate the pace at which a bicycle should be driven in such streets, which should not exceed ordinary carriage pace—*i.e.*, about eight or nine miles an hour.

With regard to lamps, the local byelaws already issued in various towns provide for their use, and though the legal authority of these byelaws is open to grave question, they may be taken to fairly represent the wish of the public in the matter; and if the public really wish their use to be enforced, bicyclists will hardly try to oppose them. It should, however, be pointed out that whereas it is obviously for the interest of the bicyclist to use a lamp when riding after dark, in order that he may see his ground and secure his personal safety, many bicyclists of experience abstain from using one solely out of consideration for the public. The glare of the lamp will often prevent a horse from seeing the bicyclist and his machine (which he otherwise probably would see), and the unexplained presence of the light may prove a source of alarm. It is not so long ago that a bicyclist was prosecuted for damages caused by an accident due to this very cause. This subject of lamps has many sides, and requires far more careful examination than it has hitherto received. My own personal opinion is that it would not be to the interest of the public to enforce their use in all instances. In any case the expression "after dark" should be chronologically defined, as in the case of the "burglary" sliding scale adopted by the police authorities. The scale adopted, however, in this instance should be a

fairly liberal one, so as to provide for the case of actual night-riding without pressing too hardly on the great majority of bicyclists who have no intention of riding after dark, but who may be just a little belated by some accidental delay.

To sum up, the object of this paper has been (1) to show that further consideration of the subject, and a greater practical acquaintance with it, may be expected to lead to a less exaggerated notion on the part of the public of the dangers to which bicycling is supposed to expose them, and of the nature of the remedies really required for their protection; (2) to suggest, as the most important means of removing the chief source of danger, the putting of bicyclists under the genuine road law, their status with regard to which seems to be so doubtful; (3) to point out that the only special need for byelaws is to enforce giving warning of approach by bell or whistle where necessary—*i.e.*, in crowded town thoroughfares, and in overtaking on the roadway whenever the person is being overtaken unawares; and further to regulate pace in towns, and (if the public will have it so) to insist on the use of a lamp after dark. With such provisions I think the bicyclist will not quarrel, and the public ought to be satisfied; and if the proposed Highways Bill becomes law this session, no doubt some local authority will take an early opportunity of submitting byelaws to the Local Government Board for their examination and approval. It will be a satisfaction to both parties to know that the President of the Local Government Board has promised to give the matter full and fair consideration whenever the occasion arises.

An Ermine Muff.

PART I.

"GOOD-BYE, once more."

"Good-bye," said Milly, trying to smile through her tears. "Don't forget me. What will you send me from Canada?"

"Whatever you like to ask, darling."

"What exaggeration! I might ask you to send me a grizzly bear, and you would not do that."

"I would, if you wanted it."

"Ah, but I'll not ask anything so unreasonable. Let me think; oh, I know—but you will miss your train."

"No, there is plenty of time. What shall it be, then?"

"An ermine muff. Will you—do you agree?"

"Of course. The best I can get. And now I must really say good-bye."

I took her in my arms, and kissed her tearful face again and again.

"There, don't cry so, pet. Good-bye, and Heaven bless you. Write often."

Another kiss, and I had left my little girl for a two years' separation. She was but eighteen, and her "cruel parents" had insisted on our waiting a couple of years before they would give her into my keeping; so that I had accepted an appointment with a newspaper editor in Canada.

A separation of this kind is, doubtless, felt far more keenly by the one who waits patiently at home

than by the other who goes through fresh places, sees new faces, and makes new acquaintances. One is not the less constant for this, but the natural effect of entire change is to dull one's recollection of events immediately preceding. At all events, I, though none the less attached to Milly Granville, forgot all about my promise from the moment when I left her weeping in the porch, until it was recalled to my mind, when completely settled down in the office of the *Montreal Planet*, with my friend Jenkins, whom I had known in England some years before, for my chief companion, he being engaged on the same paper.

Joe Jenkins was a somewhat singular-looking fellow, but a very good-hearted one. He was lengthy, bald, very thin, and extremely nervous, having a curious habit of pulling out a red pocket handkerchief when speaking, and folding it up into as small compass as it would go, or else plaiting it into innumerable folds.

It was one morning, when I was engaged on an article on English politics, that letters were brought to me, and, of course, the first I opened was that directed in a neat, ladylike handwriting, whose characteristics very much resembled those of the sender. What she said is of no consequence to any one but myself, save the postscript, which ran thus:—

"Do not forget my ermine muff."

At first I was puzzled; but I soon recollected our last interview, and the promise I had made.

"What a shame!" I said to myself. "Poor little darling, I had quite forgotten all about it. Well, I will see about it now, at once. Jenkins!"

The last word was uttered aloud, and my companion looked up from his writing, and began to feel in his pocket.

"Well."

I related the circumstances to him briefly, and asked his assistance.

"You can tell me of a good house where I can get what I want?" I said, in conclusion.

The pocket handkerchief, which had been gradually appearing in sight, was now called into requisition.

"An ermine muff?" he said, slowly.

I nodded.

"They ought to be cheap here," I said.

"They ought, perhaps; but things are not always as they ought to be."

"Why? Are not fur things cheaper out here than in England?"

"On the contrary," he said, so decidedly that all the folds came undone, and he began again. "Furs are here half as expensive again as if you buy them in Regent-street."

"Pooh, my dear fellow—what nonsense! Why, is not the north of Canada a great place for ermine, marten, and all those things? Is not Montreal the centre of the traffic in furs? So I have read, years ago."

"Montreal used to be, but is not now. At present the furs all come from England."

"The deuce they do!"

"Because the skins, Mr. Harvey, though of course collected here to begin with, are immediately sent to Great Britain, where they are prepared for use."

"Well, but I can surely get an ermine muff here somewhere?"

"You will not do so anywhere in Montreal. I will bet anything you like that you don't get so much as the skin of a single ermine. It is nearly the end of the winter, and all the fur houses will have exhausted their stocks."

Here, having folded up the handkerchief till it was a mere round, hard ball, he returned it to his pocket, as though he had folded up the subject in it and was putting it away for the present, and turned to his writing again.

"My dear Joe, I beg your pardon for doubting you; but I must make the attempt. Will you come?" "Certainly."

And, lighting our cigars, we strolled out together.

Montreal is not a very large town. The sum total of the inhabitants at this time was about one hundred thousand. We went through all the principal streets, with their solemn, formal-looking houses of grey stone, whose doors, windows, and shutters seemed to be all of the same sombre, monotonous colour. The buildings alone have a gloomy appearance, but the busier streets are made bright by the varied costumes of the different nationalities. Side by side we met a British soldier in his scarlet coat, and a redskin, stolid and dirty, his blanket thrown in graceful folds over his shoulder.

There were fur merchants in almost every street, both French and English; but not one possessed the article I sought. Everywhere we met with the same answer—

"At the end of next autumn we shall be able to supply you."

"Is the ermine, then, very scarce?" I inquired of one of these traders.

"It is, indeed, here."

"But I was under the impression that the animal was a native of Russia and Canada."

"Possibly," he said. "I know nothing about it. I never saw one alive. We get our various kinds of skins from London, where they have been prepared for use."

We returned to the office—Jenkins, I felt sure, chuckling inwardly; though he looked at me with a would-be sympathetic expression.

"You will have to give it up," he said, as we sat down again.

I was about to speak, when there was a knock at the door, and a friend of mine, Bob Sullivan, entered, his face aglow with excitement.

"I have come to say good-bye, old fellow."

"Where are you going?" I asked, as we shook hands.

"Well, 'pon my word, I hardly know. I am off somewhere, though, for a holiday; and I had some thought of going down the St. Lawrence."

"And when do you start?"

"I leave Montreal to-night."

"So soon! By the bye, are there ermine to be found down the river?"

"Plenty, I should say. Why do you ask?"

"Because I will accompany you, if you have no objection."

"Why, me dear boy," he exclaimed, with the touch of his native brogue which one heard occasionally,

"of all things, there is nothing I should like better; but I did not suggest it, because I thought you could not leave."

"My honour is involved!" I said, tragically; "but seriously, my dear fellow, I have a reason for wishing to go, and I intend to leave, whether I can be spared or not. It is for the sake of obtaining some ermine skins. Do you know whether they are in good condition at this time of year?"

"Fairly so, though it is not really the best time for them. However, the farther north we go the better they will be."

"And what about the *Montreal Planet*?" cried Jenkins, snatching out his handkerchief. "We cannot get on without you."

"Very well, the public must wait, for once. The *Montreal Daily Telephone* stopped for a fortnight some time ago, and the circulation is as good as ever."

"Then it is settled?" said Sullivan.

"It is settled," said I.

"But my dear Harvey," remonstrated poor Joe, with his hands forming a miniature bolster of red cotton, "consider! What will the editor say? And, besides, you will not have time, if he leaves here to-night."

"There will be plenty of time, for I have nothing to do save to slip a few things into my valise and get together my guns and ammunition. As for the editor, he will have to put up with it. H'm, that is rather a knotty point, though. He may turn crusty, and engage some one else in my place. By Jove! talk of the— Good morning, Mr. Markham. We were speaking of you."

Our editor had, in fact, at that minute put in an appearance, and his keen, business-like face was turned from one to the other of us inquiringly.

"Well, to be frank, Mr. Markham," said Bob, "we were conspiring. Jack Harvey and I are going down the St. Lawrence, exploring, and taking our guns, of course. I tell you what, you and Joe Jenkins here had better come with us. Four will be just a nice little party. You agree?"

"Stop, stop, my dear sir—don't be in such a hurry. What about the subscribers to the *M. P.*?"

"Oh, tell them you were obliged to go to get the materials for a new serial—anything you like."

The editor looked dubious, and for fully five minutes remained with his eyes firmly fixed on a knot in the boards at his feet, while we remained perfectly silent, afraid to disturb his meditations, lest we should injure our cause.

Bob winked at me, as he saw the frown upon the noble brow of the proprietor of the *M. P.* gradually disappearing, while one corner of his mouth twitched slightly, as if he had some thoughts of indulging in a smile for once in his life.

At last he spoke.

"I have not had a gun in my hand for ten years. When did you say you start?"

"This evening."

"I shall be ready. Ta-ta."

And the door closed behind him.

Scarcely had his footsteps become inaudible, when Sullivan burst into a roar of laughter, in which I joined heartily.

We were each about to seek our respective lodgings to prepare for the trip—Jenkins having surrendered, and consenting to accompany us, after the example set by the editor—when a sudden thought occurred to my Irish companion.

"Jack, old man, I have an idea."

"And it is—"

"Captain Higgins of the *Phyllis* sails to-night. I know him well. He will take us for nothing."

"Sullivan, you are a genius. Perhaps you had better mention it to old Markham, though. You pass his place, don't you?"

Bob nodded, and vanished, followed in a few minutes by Jenkins, and by myself after I had answered my letter; and that same evening Captain Higgins welcomed us heartily on board his barque, which was about to raise anchor *en route* for the Gulf of Saint Lawrence.

That was a most enjoyable evening. Free for the time from all cares and worries of a literary life, we sailed down the river, revelling in the scenery, feeling the cold north wind blowing on our faces, and giving us new energy.

"Isn't this prime?" said Sullivan, as side by side we leaned over the bulwarks, smoking, and feeling the gentle rolling of the ship as she rose on the wave. "Look at old Joe. He has forgotten the existence of that red cotton affair of his. 'Pon my word, I shall steal that one of these days, and see what happens to him."

"And how well old Markham and Captain Higgins seem to hit it off! That captain, by the by, looks as though he could let go at the men if he chose."

"He can; you are right, and you will hear him if anything goes wrong."

The ensuing day proved the truth of these words. We had nearly reached Quebec, and I had descended to the cabin for my field-glass, to take a look at the distant spires, when I heard the captain's voice.

"All hands on deck," he shouted.

As I ran up the hatchway, he gave vent to an oath, and I saw him stamping about in a perfect fury.

"To the capstan!" he roared—"to the capstan!"

In an instant I was working hard with the rest; but without having the slightest idea as to the cause of this sudden excitement. Every one on board was busied in the same way, except Captain Higgins. We were fast nearing Quebec, and vessels of every description surrounded us on all sides.

I was squeezed between two sailors, and could not even glance right or left, so that it was impossible for me to discover the reason of the disturbance. Then suddenly an ominous cracking startled us all.

"Stop!" cried the captain, with a string of oaths.

And we stopped hauling on the instant, and I looked round. A large steamer coming out of the port had run into us, owing to the carelessness of the pilot in coming out of the harbour. The captain raged and swore, till I thought he had used up all the bad language our tongue contains, when he began again with something new to my ears.

Sullivan came to my side at that minute, wiping the perspiration from his forehead.

"I see you have been at it, too," he said, still rather out of breath with his exertions. "That was a narrow escape, me dear boy."

"Thank heaven," said the captain, approaching us, "all is not so bad as I at first feared. By the promptitude of our movement we escaped at least half of the shock. Otherwise, we should have been at the bottom before now."

"You promised to come and dine with us on shore to-day, you know, captain."

"It will be impossible now, I am sorry to say. I shall be obliged to stay on board, to repair any damage. You had better go ashore at once. My gig shall take you to the quay."

"And can you really not accompany us? Then, join us later. Come as soon as you can."

But Captain Higgins still shook his head.

"I wish I could; but it is impossible. You will have all to-day and to-morrow before you; for we shall not be ready for sea again till the day after."

We were obliged to take him at his word; and, leaving him hailing storms of curses on the heads of the sailors, we were soon landed on the quay at Quebec.

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BY GEO. MANVILLE FENN.

CHAPTER XXI.—MEETINGS.



RULY it was with something like the wondering pleasure that must have been felt by the first photographer who applied his developing liquid to a sensitised plate, and then saw spring out by magic, as it were, first faint, then stronger lines, feature by feature, the lineaments of a beautiful face, gazed old Matt Space upon Lucy Grey, as Time,

that wonderful developer, caused her day by day to take more and more the aspect of a beautiful woman. Yesterday almost it seemed to him that she was a mere girl, a child; but the transition had been rapid. True, hers was a time of life when the bud is seen to expand rapidly; but here there had been forcing powers at work. In fact, in quiet self-dependence, thought, and her managing ways, Lucy had been for years a woman, and the friend and counsellor of her mother in many a sore trial. Familiarity with sorrow, poverty, her step-father's struggles, and their life in the busy streets of London, had all tended to develop the mind of Lucy Grey, who might truly be said never to have known a girlhood: nurse to her little sister and brother in sickness and health, attendant of her ailing mother, housekeeper, cheerer of Septimus Hardon's misery, and now busy worker for the family's support, it were strange indeed if she had not stepped, as it were, from child to woman, for in such cases as hers years seem secondary.

But the years had not been stationary; for Lucy Grey was now seventeen, and the old printer used to gaze with pride upon the fair girl, who chose him gladly for her companion to and from the warehouse for which she worked.

But Matt was angry and annoyed, for he had been made the half-confidant of a secret which galled and worried him. Twenty times a day he vowed that he would have no more of it, and at such times the consumption of his snuff was terrible. There was hardly a lamp-post in Carey-street to which he had not fiercely declared that he would "split," nodding mysteriously the whole while; but night after night, when he met the appealing look of Lucy, all his resolutions faded like mist in the sun, and he would whisper the next post he passed that he was getting to be a fool in his old age.

The old man had carried the letter he received to Lucy, giving it to her at dinner-time, while Mrs.

Hardon was lying down; and then furtively watched the eager looks, the flushing cheeks, and tear-wet eyes, as the reader devoured the contents.

"You'll be here to-night, Mr. Space?" said Lucy, looking up. "You'll go with me?"

"Old Matt Space, miss, is your humble servant, and he'll do what you tell him; but he don't like that at all. He don't like secrets;" and the old man pointed to the note. "Why not tell her?" and he nodded towards the inner room.

"No, no," whispered Lucy, hurriedly.

"All right, miss, all right. I'll be here at seven. Be taken bad, I suppose, and slip off for an hour."

And at the appointed time the old man hurried from the office where he was employed, at the great risk of being told that he would be wanted no more, and accompanied Lucy to where, in the dusk of evening, she stood talking to the dark, showily-dressed woman, whose agitated, mobile countenance made the paint upon her cheeks look weird and strange. She had hold tightly of Lucy's hand, and more than once old Matt saw her kiss it fondly, clinging to it as if it were her last hold upon innocence and purity.

Twice during their interview the old man advanced, signing that it was time they went, by many a hasty jerk with his thumb; but the appealing looks he encountered sent him muttering back to his former post beneath a lamp, where he stood watching uneasily.

And old Matt had something to watch, too; for twice he saw the villanously-countenanced Mr. Jarker slink by on the opposite side of the way, trying very hard to appear ignorant of a meeting taking place, but failing dismally, for from time to time his head was turned in the direction, besides which many a passer-by paused to gaze, with something like effrontery, upon the sweet, candid face of Lucy, while more than one seemed disposed to turn back. All this troubled the old man, and made him redouble his watchfulness as he walked a little nearer to the speakers; but he did not see that, some fifty yards down the street, standing in a doorway, there was another watcher, from beneath whose broad white brow a pair of keen grey eyes were fixed uneasily upon the group, with a troubled, puzzled expression.

"God—God bless you!" whispered the woman; "you must go now, my darling!" just as a well-dressed man sauntered back, cigar in hand, and, slightly stooping, addressed some observation to the startled girl; when old Matt, who had been watching his movements and followed close behind, suddenly shouldered him on one side, and so vigorously, that he stepped into the road to save himself from falling. Then there was a shout from a passing cabman, a half-uttered cry, and the daintily-dressed loungeer was rubbing the marks of a muddy wheel from his dark trousers, while old Matt, with a gruff "Come along, miss," drew Lucy's arm through his own, and, with a short, sharp nod to her companion, marched her off.

But Matt did not turn back to see the next change in the scene, or he might have looked upon Mr. William Jarker crossing the road and speaking to the dark woman, who replied fiercely and shortly, as

she turned from him in an abrupt manner, but only to return and say a few words quietly ere she hurried off. Then the city dandy, recovered from his fright, followed the steps of old Matt and Lucy, till a firm hand was laid upon his shoulder, when turning, he encountered the calm, fixed gaze of a man of some one- or two-and-thirty, dressed as a clergyman.

"Stand back, sir, or I give you into custody for insulting that young lady," he said, in quiet, hard, measured tones.

"Young what?" was the reply.

But there was a something so firm and convincing in the look of the keen grey eyes upon him, that, muttering inaudibly, the fellow shrank back, and was soon lost in the passing crowd.

The Reverend Arthur Sterne then looked hastily round, to see that Lucy Grey had passed down the next street, to whose corner he hurried, where he could see her nearly at the bottom, with old Matt striding fiercely along. He then turned to look for the woman who had been Lucy's companion, but she had disappeared. However, he walked hastily in the direction she had taken, and searched eagerly for some distance, now thinking that he caught sight of her bonnet on this side, now upon that, but always disappointed; several times he was about to return, but a delusive glimpse of some figure in the distance led him on, till, tired and disheartened, he turned to reach his apartments, when he encountered, first, the ill-looking countenance of Mr. William Jarker, who made a sort of slouching attempt at a bow, and directly after, a quiet-looking individual, with a straw in his mouth and his hands in his pockets, whom Mr. Sterne passed without notice, though he had recognised the birdcatcher, whose wife he had from time to time visited. But Mr. Sterne was not aware that he had been followed by the ruffian, as a bull-dog would follow his master, or a hound his quarry—though it is disgracing the latter simile to use it. Nor was Mr. Jarker aware that that quiet-looking individual had been following him in turn till he was once more about to track the curate, when for a moment he and the quiet individual stood face to face, apparently without seeing one another; but it was observable that Mr. Jarker immediately went off in quite another direction, while, after slowly twisting his straw and winking to himself, the quiet man slowly took the same route as Mr. Sterne.

CHAPTER XXII.—ANOTHER FUNERAL.

SEPTIMUS HARDON leaped to his feet, as suddenly a key turned and the bedroom-door opened; there was a sharp scuffling noise, as of a swarm of rats leaping hurriedly from the bed, and tearing over one another, in their haste to reach the hole; a wild shriek from a woman, a heavy fall, and all was again silent.

As soon as he could recall his scattered energies, Septimus Hardon raised the woman's head and bathed her face, when she soon opened her eyes and sat up, gazing at him with a horrified aspect.

"Hush!" he said, softly; "don't be alarmed. My name is Hardon; I came to see my father for the last time. I think I used to know you in the town?"

"Oh, yes; I remember you now, sir," stammered the old woman; "but you gave me a dreadful turn."

"Hush! Come downstairs, now," whispered Septimus, and he motioned her to follow him to the door.

The woman was about to obey, but, glancing round the room, she pointed to the freshly-gnawed wood and the heap of chips.

Septimus shuddered, and they went together and closed the coffin-lid.

"Stop a minute, sir, please," said the woman—a poor cottager's wife from the town, who followed the same road in Somesham adopted by Mrs. Sims of Lincoln's-inn—"stop a minute, sir, please, and I'll be back directly."

The poor thing trembled so that her teeth chattered, as she hurried away; but she returned in a few minutes with a huge black cat, which struggled from her arms and ran, with dilated eyes, towards the rats'-hole, where it softly crouched, motionless but for the writhings of its lithe tail, as it sat there watching for the coming of its enemies.

There were funeral cake and wine upon the table below, and an extra supply of the former was cut up and sealed in squares of paper, bearing a couple of verses of a psalm, and the pastrycook's name and address as a serious advertisement.

After waiting a couple of hours, most of which was spent wandering about the old house, Septimus Hardon took his old place in the little dining-room, opposite to the sealed-up bureau and cupboards. The undertaker and his man arrived, and soon after came Doctor Hardon's rival, who had been called in to the deceased. The undertaker knew Septimus and bowed; the surgeon, too, knew him again and shook hands, not being at all surprised to see him there; while he invited him to dinner before he should leave the town. But although Doctor Hardon, who came soon after, well knew Septimus Hardon, he *was* surprised to see him there, and did not shake hands, but started as though some one had struck him a violent blow. Mr. Keening—Keening and Keening—then entered the room, when the gentlemen all took wine in a heavy, impressive way, and talked in a low tone about matters as far removed as possible from the purpose for which they had met together.

Then came the undertaker, to ask in a subdued way if any gentleman wished to go upstairs; but no gentleman save the son wished to go; and he stole away to stand and gaze for a few moments upon the calm, pale features, and then returned to where the undertaker was distributing gloves of the best black kid, asking the size each gentleman took with a smooth, oily courtesy. Scarves were then produced, of the richest and stiffest corded silk, cloaks were tied on, and, as each mourner was dressed for his part of the performance, he was inspected all round, and from top to toe, by the undertaker before he was allowed to reseal himself. Then more wine, and more subdued conversation followed, interrupted by the grating of wheels upon the gravel drive. Heavy footsteps overhead now; trampling; some one slipping upon the stairs, and the balustrade heard to creak loudly as an exclamation was uttered; a shuf-

fling noise; more footsteps heavily descending; a sharp pattering of feet on the passage oilcloth, and much rustling past the room door, followed by an interval of a few minutes, and the noise of wheels going and wheels coming; and then the undertaker stood bowing in the open door, and motioned Septimus Hardon to follow.

This was almost too much for Doctor Hardon, who had ordered that everything possible to make the funeral impressive should be done. The large hearse and two mourning-coaches had been hired expressly from the county town; velvet and ostrich plumes were in plenty; and, as chief mourner, the doctor had reckoned upon a very imposing spectacle, one that should to a certain extent erase the horrors of his brother's end, and help to raise him, the doctor, in the estimation of the inhabitants of Somesham. But now this was spoiled by the coming of the shabby, worn son, towards whom the undertaker had leaned in the belief, in his ignorance, that he was the chief mourner.

Septimus rose, and moved towards the door, while Doctor Hardon hesitated to obey the beckoning finger of the undertaker; but the dread of drawing attention to his tremor made him more himself, and, putting a white cambric kerchief to his face, he followed his nephew, to be directly after shut up with him in the mourning coach. But Septimus noticed him not, as he sat stern with knitted brow, no muscle betraying the wild emotions struggling within.

The surgeon and solicitor followed in the next coach; and then the funeral procession moved slowly off towards the town, making as great a show as the undertaker's strict adherence to his employer's orders could effect. Dr. Hardon said he wished to keep up appearances for his dear brother's sake; but he had not reckoned upon the presence of the stern, careworn man by his side, and he shrank into his corner of the mourning-coach, angry, but at the same time fearful lest a scene might ensue which should damage his reputation in the good town of Somesham; besides, it would have been so painful to the feelings of his three daughters—he only thought of three, even though one was married and two resided at a distance. Nothing could have been more unfortunate than the appearance of Septimus at such a time, and during the silent ride the doctor's wishes were anything but loving towards his nephew; while, upon reaching the church, the gall of bitterness was made more bitter, for the doctor again found himself made of secondary importance by Septimus, who seemed to have roused himself into action for the time, and strode on in front, close behind the coffin, to take his place in the church so crowded with familiar recollections. There, bowed down in the same pew, but with very different thoughts, uncle and nephew listened ere they stood together by the bricked vault prepared for the remains of old Octavius, and here again the doctor seemed to have shrunk into a non-entity, for every eye was fixed upon the shabby mourner by his side.

The clergyman had concluded, and, closing his book, was slowly walking away; the clerk had followed, and at the church-gate the foremost mourn-

ing-coach stood waiting, with a crowd of children and idlers around, the hearse being drawn up at a distance, already half denuded of its plumes by one of the deputies of the furnisher. There was a crowd, too, thickly clustered amidst grave and tombstone in the churchyard, for plenty of interest attached to the death of old Octavius Hardon, and the people of Somesham seemed bound to see the matter to the end.

Nothing now remained for the mourners but to take a last glance at the coffin and come away. Septimus had stood for a few moments looking down into the vault, with the stern aspect of resolution fading from his face, to give way to one of helpless misery, when, turning to leave, he encountered the mourning brother advancing with drooping head and raised handkerchief to take his farewell look.

Septimus Hardon shrank back as from a serpent, and made room for his uncle to pass; but the next moment a sudden rage possessed him, and, stepping forward, he laid a hand upon the doctor's shoulder, whispering a few words in his ear.

Hastily confronting his nephew, the doctor turned, when, shaking a threatening finger in his face, Septimus exclaimed—

"Hypocrite! I know—"

But before he could finish the sentence, the doctor started back as if to avoid the threatening hand; his foot slipped upon the very edge of one of the boards, and the next moment, before a hand could be stretched out to save him, he fell with a crash into the vault.

For a while no one moved, a thrill of horror running through the assembled crowd; but soon help in plenty was there to raise the fallen man from the coffin upon which he lay, apparently senseless; and amidst a buzz of suggestions the sexton nimbly descended, rope in hand, and, slipping the strong cord around the doctor's chest, he was dragged out and borne to the waiting coach.

Septimus, shocked, and almost paralysed at the effect of his threatening gesture, stood for a few minutes looking on, till, seeing help afforded to the fallen man, he turned slowly away, people giving place right and left to allow him to pass. On reaching the second coach, he hastily disencumbered himself of his trappings of woe, and threw them to the astonished man at the door, who had never before witnessed such unseemly conduct at a funeral. Then, after another hasty glance towards the crowd around his uncle, Septimus strode off in the direction of the County Arms; while, gaping, talking, and wondering, the people slowly dispersed, saving such as followed the coach to the doctor's residence in the High-street, where they hung about, clinging helplessly to the iron railings, and staring at the dining-room windows, until Mr. Brande, the surgeon, and Mr. Keening, the solicitor, came out together, looking very important, and walked down the street; when several of the railing barnacles followed at a distance, as if the gentlemen had brought out a printed account of the gossip-engendering scene in their pockets ready for distribution.

With his mourning habiliments Septimus Hardon seemed to have cast off the interest the crowd might

be supposed to have taken in him; for no one followed the thin, shabby man in dusty clothes and battered hat, as he strode on, till abreast of the old inn, where he paused, as if about to enter; but the next moment, shaking his head wearily, he walked on, and was soon past the first milestone on his way to the great city.

CHAPTER XXIII.—AFTER A LAPSE.

"D O, sir?" exclaimed old Matt, pausing in his occupation of pulling the string to make a lathen figure throw out arms and legs for the delectation of little Tom—"do, sir? Why, what I've always told you, and you say the parson's told you—go in for it. You've nothing to lose, so if anything happens you must win. A year last spring now since I come running in here with that par, thinking I'd made your fortune for you, sir; and now—look there, what you've done, you've pulled one of his legs off!" This in a parenthesis to the little boy between his knees. "And where are you? Certainly you get on a bit with the writing, sir; but if it was me, I couldn't have settled down without making him prove his words."

"But, you see," said Septimus, looking up from his copying, "I'm not clever, I'm not a business man; and what could I do without money for legal advice? It's a sad life this; and ours is, and always was, a miserable family, and my uncle's too. Look at him—his children are always away, while Agnes came to us through some love affair with the assistant, and soon after I came away she disappeared, and has never been heard of since. Did you speak?"

"No," said Matt, whose face was puckered up, while he had been trying to catch the eye of Lucy, who sat at the window busily preparing some work for a bright new sewing-machine which had lately been supplied to her from the warehouse where she was employed.

"He has the money," continued Septimus, "but that can't compensate for the loss of his child. Poor Agnes!"

"Don't speak of her," exclaimed Mrs. Septimus, angrily. "She was a very weak, bad woman, and—"

"Hush!" said Septimus, sternly, "we are all weak; and who made us judges?"

Mrs. Septimus fidgeted about in her easy-chair, looking nettled and angry as she sat near the window; while with flushed cheek Lucy bent lower and lower over her work, once only catching Matt's eye, when the old man looked so alarmingly mysterious that the flush upon her face deepened, and she rose and left the room.

"You see, sir," said Matt, continuing a conversation that had evidently been broken off, "it's been let go by so long now, when steps ought to have been taken at once. No offence meant—you won't be put out if I speak plain?"

Septimus shook his head, and went on copying.

"You see," said Matt, "you ought to have gone to Doctors' Commons, and entered a something against your uncle, and done a something else, and had a lawyer to engage counsel, and then this precious uncle of yours couldn't have touched the property till the matter had been tried in the Court

of Probate; when, of course, you must have come out with flying colours. But here, you see, you do nothing; first letting one month slip away, and then another, and all the while he goes to work, gets uninterrupted possession, sticks tighter and tighter to it, and, for aught you know, he's spent it all by this time. You ought, you know, to have carried on the war at once."

"And about the sinews?" said Septimus drearily, without raising his head.

"Blame them sinews!" cried the old man; "they're about the tightest, and hardest, and toughest things in the whole world. It seems to me, you know, sir, thinking it over—and I've had it in bed with me scores of nights—it seems to me that your uncle rather reckoned on his meeting no opposition, and on your—snuff, snuff, snuff," muttered the old man in a confused way, as he fumbled about in his pockets.

"Say it out, Matt," said Septimus with a sad smile, "my weakness—no doubt of it, for he could never have believed his own words."

"Well, that was the word, certainly, sir," said Matt; "and after all your fuss, I don't know that a man's any the better for being strong, mind you. I wasn't going to say weakness, for I was hanging fire for a word that meant the same with the corners rubbed off a bit; but there wasn't letter enough in the case to make it up."

"Can't help it, Matt," said Septimus, removing a hair from his pen by wiping it upon his coat-tail, and then smearing his forehead with his inky fingers, ready for Lucy, who entered the room directly after, to take his careworn head upon her arm, wet a corner of her handkerchief between her lips, and then wipe away the obstinate smear—Septimus the while as still and patient as possible, till the fair girl concluded her performance with a kiss, when he went on with his task. "Exors—strators—and assigns," muttered Septimus, writing. "Can't help it, Matt, I suppose it's my nature to be weak."

"And let every one kick you," said Mat to himself. "Well, sir," he continued, aloud, "it's my belief that this uncle of yours, not to put too fine a point upon it, is a rogue. He's a deep one, that's what he is; but then, you know, he isn't the only deep one in the world, and if you'd begun when you should have done—there, I won't say so any more," he exclaimed, hastily, for Septimus made an impatient movement. "Now, you see, you've taken this sudden whim—very well, sir, all right—we've talked you into it, say then—and you mean now to see if you can't go on with the matter. Better late than never, say I; so now, how does it stand? He has possession, and that's what they call nine points of the law; and he's had possession for above a year, and you haven't taken a step to dispute his right—Well, I can't go into the thing without speaking of the rights and wrongs of it!" exclaimed the old man, in an injured tone, for Septimus shuffled nervously in his seat.

"There, go on!" said Septimus.

"But, there, p'raps I'm making too free," said the old man, snatching at the string so angrily that he broke the other leg of the figure he had brought the

child. "Never mind, my man," he whispered; "I'll bring you such a good un next time I come."

"Go on, Matt," said Septimus, quietly; "you ought to make allowances for me."

"So I do, sir; so I do—heaps," cried the old man, eagerly.

"We have not so many friends," continued Septimus, laying down his pen and stretching out his hand, "that we can afford to behave slightly to their advice, even if it is unpalatable."

Old Matt took the proffered hand, and shook it warmly, before going on with his subject.

"Well, sir," said Matt, "you say he told you out flat that you were a—a—well, you know what I mean."

"Yes, yes," said Septimus, drearily; for he had so familiarized himself in thought with the word, that it had ceased to bring up an indignant flush to his cheek.

"Well," said Matt, "then the whole of our work—I say 'our,' you know—"

Septimus nodded.

"The whole of our work consists in proving him false."

"Exactly," said Septimus, sticking his pen behind his ear; "but how?"

"Documentary evidence," said the old man—"that's it, documentary evidence," and he took snuff loudly. "Marriage stiffikits, baptism registers, and so on. Let's see; I don't think there was any regular registration in those days. Now, then, to begin with, sir. Where were your father and mother married?—that is, if they were?" muttered the old man in what was meant for an undertone; but Septimus heard the words.

"Oh, yes," he said, quietly; "they were married in the City."

"Very good," said Matt. "Then suppose we get a copy of the marriage stiffikit, sworn to and witnessed, how then?"

"Well, that proves the marriage," said Septimus.

"To be sure," said Matt; "but then you'll find he bases his claim upon your being born before. You don't think he denies that your father and mother were married? He don't, does he?"

"No," said Septimus, wearily, as he opened a pocket-book and drew out a frayed and broken letter, which had separated here and there in the folds from frequent reference. "You are right, Matt," he said, after reading a few lines. "The marriage register would be no good."

"Yes, it would," said Matt; "it's documentary evidence, and it will be one brick in the tower we want to build up; so don't you get sneezing at it because it aint everything. It will be one thing; and so far so good, when we get it. You see it's a ticklish thing, and before you put it in a solicitor's hands—a respectable solicitor's hands, for cheap law's the dearest thing in Lincoln's-inn—you must have something to show him. Now, so far so good, only recollect your uncle's on firm ground, while as yet you're nowhere. Now, say we go to a good solicitor. 'Were you born in wedlock?' says he. 'Yes,' says you. 'Now then,' says he, 'prove it.'"

Septimus sighed, and began to wonder whether his uncle was right.

"Now, then," said Matt, "family Bible with birth in, eh?"

"We had one, full of plates," said Septimus, recalling the old Sunday afternoons, when he had leaned over the table amusing himself with the engravings; "but there were no entries in it, only my grandfather's name. I fancy, though, now you mention it, my father had a little pocket Bible with some entries in, but I never took particular notice."

"Rotten reed—a rotten reed," said the old man. "You are not sure; and even if you were, your uncle's been foxy enough to hunt the place over and over, and that book's gone up the chimney in smoke, or under the grate in ashes, long enough ago. No will, you say?"

"Not that I could hear of," said Septimus.

"We might, p'raps, find the nurse, or doctor, or some old friend; but then, unless they can bring up documentary evidence, 'tain't much good. You know, when old folks are made to swear about things that took place fifty years ago, people shake their heads and think about failing memories, and so on. You see we must have something strong to work upon. If we could get the date of your birth, and the marriage stiffikit, we should be all right, shouldn't we?"

"Yes, they would prove all we want," said Septimus.

"Exactly so," said Matt; "and if we couldn't get the date of your birth, how about date of baptism?"

"That would do just as well," exclaimed Septimus.

"No, it wouldn't," said the old man, "without it's got in how old you were when the parson made a cross on your forehead—eh?"

Septimus was damped directly.

"It's no use to be sanguine, you know, sir. What we've got to do is to expect nothing, and then all we do get is clear profit. Now, where were you baptized—do you know that?"

"Yes," said Septimus.

"Well, that's all right, if it contains the entry of your age at the time, but we won't be sure; and if it does, you see if your uncle don't bring someone to swear it's false, and that they nursed you a twelve-month before you really were born. Most likely, you know, there'd be half-a-score done at the same time as yours, and they never asked your age. I don't say so, you know, only that perhaps it was so. Now, what do you call your birthday, sir?"

"Tenth of January, 17—," said Septimus.

"Very good, sir; but then, that's only what you say, mind, and a bare word's not worth much in a court of law when a case is being tried. 'Tis,' says you. 'Tisn't,' says your uncle, who's rich, and prosperous, and respectable, and has the money, and lives in a big house, with plenty of well-to-do friends round him. 'Prove your case,' says the judge to you; and mind you, sir, this is the ticklish point: it aint a question of who's to have your father's money. He's got it, and it's a question of your turning him out. So, 'Prove your case,' says the judge. 'You've left this man in possession for a year, and now you say he does not hold the property lawfully. Prove your case.' 'Can't, my lord,' says you—'no docu-

mentary evidence.' And now do you know what the judge would say?"

Septimus shook his head dismally.

"Judgment for the defendant—that's your uncle, you know."

And then, as if highly satisfied with his logical mode of putting the case, Matt snapped his fingers loudly after a large pinch of snuff.

"But," said Mrs. Septimus, "my doctor told me that he always kept a register of all the births he attended."

Mrs. Septimus said no more, for old Matt's fist went down upon the table with a bang that made some of the ink leap from the stand, but fortunately not upon Septimus Hardon's clean sheets of paper.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am!" cried Matt, hurriedly sopping up the ink with his wisp of a handkerchief; "but blame me if I don't wish I'd been born a woman! Trust them for getting to the bottom of everything. Why, Lord bless you, sir, there you are—there's the case in a nutshell—that's the matter hit right in the bull's-eye! Why didn't you begin about it before? You're right as a trivet. There's the date of the marriage, and there's the doctor's book—such and such a day, such and such a time; medicine and attendance, two pound twelve shillings and sixpence. Hallo!" exclaimed Matt, scratching his head, "that comes very pat—where did I hear those words before? But there, look here, sir; I think we've got hold of the right end of the tangle, and here it is. You go down to Somesham, and tell nunky how it stands. 'Here we are,' says you; 'and now give up peaceable and quiet, and I'll say nothing at all about what's gone by.' Of course he won't, and begins to talk big about kicking you out of the house, and all that sort of thing. 'Two can play at that,' says you; and as he won't be civil, he must have it hot. Back you come; put it in a decent solicitor's hands. With your good documentary evidence out he goes—in you go; and my di'mond has a pony with a long silky tail; Miss Lucy a carriage, and missis here an invalid chair, and old Matt to push it—eh, ma'am?"

"But about finding the doctor," said Septimus, sadly.

"Well, yes—true, to be sure," said Matt, over a fresh pinch of snuff; "but I think we can manage that part, sir. Don't you see, we can tell our road now we've got our line cut out; and we've only got it to do. There's some pye in the case, of course, but we can correct as we go on, eh? There's a doctor's directory, and we can soon find him."

"There's a hitch directly," said Septimus. "I don't know his name."

"Phillips!" exclaimed Mrs. Hardon, excitedly.

"There we are again," cried Matt; "who'd be without a good partner?"

"But how do you know?" said Septimus.

"I remember in your mother's last illness," said Mrs. Septimus, "that she told me how she longed for her old doctor, for she felt sure Mr. Thomas Hardon did not understand her complaint; and that was the first cause of disagreement between your father and Dr. Hardon. I heard your father tell him afterwards that he had killed his sister, and to leave the house."

"But the name?" said Septimus, anxious to change the conversation.

"Phillips—the same as my own; and that was why it made an impression upon my memory."

"Talk about cards to play, sir!" cried Matt, "why, that's winning: your partner has played the leading trump."

Septimus Hardon rose from his seat, to begin anxiously pacing up and down the room. He could see plainly enough the value of the position he was nerving himself to fight for; but he shrank, as he had shrunk again and again, from the exposure certain, whether he succeeded or not. Vacillating in the extreme, he was at one time telling himself that it was his duty to try and clear his mother's fame, though the next moment would find him shrinking from the task; while his brow wrinkled up as he sighed and looked from face to face, lastly on that of old Matt, who, having relieved himself of the child, was taking snuff extravagantly, and chuckling and rubbing his hands in anticipation of the coming triumph.

"Now, sir," he said, upon catching the troubled man's eye, "about this doctor."

"Dead before now," said Septimus. "Allowing him to have been quite young for a doctor, he would be eighty now, and how few men reach that age!"

"Pooh! nonsense!" cried Matt; "scores do—hundreds do—ninety either. Eighty! Pooh! nothing! youth, sir. Why, I'm past sixty, and see what a boy I look, eh? Why, I believe Miss Lucy would pick me out from scores to take care of her—wouldn't you, miss?"

Lucy looked up from her work, nodded, and smiled.

"But now business," said the old man. "Where did you live, sir, before you went down in the country?"

"Finsbury," said Septimus.

"And were you born there, eh?"

"I believe so," said Septimus, wondering in his own mind whether it was worth all this trouble, perhaps to gain nothing.

"To be sure," cried Matt; "and now we shall soon find it out. Brass plate on the door—'Mr. Phillips, Surgeon;' big lamp sticking out, red bull's-eye one side, green t'other, like railway signals: 'danger' and 'all right' to the people in the street."

Old Matt rose to go, after appointing to meet Septimus on the following morning to take the first steps for obtaining the "documentary evidence" so necessary for their future plans.

"Ten to the moment, you'll see me, sir," said Matt. "Good afternoon, ma'am, and—Ah, Miss Lucy's gone!"

But Septimus only sighed, and sat down once more to his weary copying, sheets of which he so often spoiled by letting his thoughts wander from the task in hand.

"No more business in him, sir," said Matt, as he descended the stairs, "than—Ah, here we are, then. Thought I was going away without seeing you again, miss."

For he had encountered Lucy upon the stairs.

"Hush!" she whispered, "I only wanted to ask

you to please be careful. I was so frightened this afternoon."

Old Matt buttoned up his coat as tightly as if his honour were inside it, pursed up his lips, nodded his head seriously, and then, laying one finger upon the side of his nose, he shuffled off, looking as mysterious as if he were the repository of State secrets, and ready to bid defiance to all the racks and thumb-screws of the good old times.

Lucy Grey stood for a minute gazing after the shabby figure, and then, turning to ascend, she coloured slightly upon finding herself face to face with the old Frenchwoman who occupied the attic floor, and who now, with a sneering smile upon her thin lips, and an inquisitive light peering from her half-closed eyes, looked at her, and then passed softly and silently as a cat down the stairs without saying a word.

A Living Fishing Line.

DOWN amongst the sea-weed stems and pointed rocks we perceive a long, black, tangled string, like a giant's leather boot-lace set to soak. Let us trace it in its various folds and twists, and disentangle some of it; we shall then have in hand a tough, slippery, india-rubber-like substance, which might well be pronounced a sea string, and classed with the long trailing weeds amongst which we have found it.

A sea string it is, but not a weed; in fact, a living lasso, capable of consuming the prey it encloses within its treacherous folds. From twenty to thirty feet is no uncommon length for this artful animated fishing line to reach, but its diameter rarely exceeds an eighth of an inch. It has a mouth, however, capable of considerable distension and holding power.

What can appear more innocent than this delicate-looking creeper, trailing here and there as the heaving water wells and flows as the tide comes in? Let an unwary tube-dweller, lulled into a false security, stretch forth its tentacles to meet the welcome wave, and a pointed head is adroitly insinuated. The mouth effects its tenacious grasp on the yielding tissues, and the tenant of the tube becomes food for the *Nemertes Borlasii*, for such is the name of this cord-like freebooter.

Mr. Kingsley appears to have taken more than ordinary interest in the habits of this strange creature. Speaking of it, he inquires—"Is it alive? It hangs helpless and motionless, a mere velvet string, across the hand. Ask the neighbouring annelids, and the fry of the rock fishes; or put it in a vase at home, and see. It lies motionless, trailing itself among the gravel. You cannot tell where it begins or ends. It may be a strip of dead sea-weed—*Himantalia lorea*, perhaps, or *Chorda filum*—or even a tarred string. So thinks the little fish who plays over and over it, till he touches at last what is too surely a head. In an instant a bell-shaped sucker mouth has fastened to its side; in another instant, from one lip a concave double proboscis, just like a tapi's (another instance of the repetition of forms), has clasped him like a finger.

"And now begins the struggle; but in vain. He

is being 'played' with such a fishing-rod as the skill of a Wilson or a Stoddart never could invent: a living line, with elasticity beyond that of the most delicate fly-rod, which follows every lunge, shortening and lengthening, slipping and twisting round every piece of gravel and stem of sea-weed with a tiring drag such as no Highland wrist or step could ever bring to bear on salmon or trout.

"The victim is tired now, and slowly yet dexterously his blind assailant is feeling and shifting along his side till he reaches one end of him; and then the black lips expand; and slowly and surely the curved finger begins packing him end foremost down into the gullet, where he sinks inch by inch, till the swelling which marks his place is lost among the coils, and he is probably macerated into a pulp long before he has reached the opposite extremity. Once safe down, the black murderer contracts into a knotted heap, and lies like a boa with a stag inside him, motionless and blest."—*Popular Educator*.

An Ermine Muff.

PART II.

WE were soon strolling about in the lower town, looking at everything that was new to our eyes. Deciding on an hotel, a few minutes found us partaking of an excellent dinner, for which the excitement and the exertions of the morning had given us excellent appetites. Sullivan, however, was in despair because we could obtain no oysters for any price whatever. The town was exhausted in this respect, and the boats had not yet come in.

Poor Bob began his dinner with an ill-used air, and would scarcely reply to our remarks.

"Never mind, man," said Markham, laughing; "we shall have plenty at Caraquette."

"Ah, that's all very well," grumbled Sullivan; "but we are not there yet."

"But we shall be in a few days," said I.

"And what the dickens shall we do with ourselves to-day and to-morrow?"

"Well, you fellows can do what you like—go and see the Castle of St. Louis, and all the other interesting places. For my part, I am going to try at all the fur-trading houses, and see if they have any ermine skins."

"Here?" said Jenkins. "It will be a hopeless quest."

"What!" said Sullivan, "in a wretched little town where you can't get any oysters?"

"Little! There are fifty thousand inhabitants."

"I have an idea," said the editor, suddenly. "Suppose we go on a fishing expedition."

"To fish for what?"

"I have heard," said Mr. Markham, "that there are plenty of good trout in the Montmorency, near the rapids; and we can easily get there from here. It is only a few miles."

This proposal gained favour with all the party, for there was the chance of feathered game, and of four-footed, as well as of the finny tribe, for which we ostensibly went.

Provided with guns and fishing-rods, we set out soon after our repast was concluded.

The river Montmorency is celebrated for its beautiful falls, which form the theme of all travellers in these parts. On our way we passed through the pretty little village of Beauport, and then, for some distance, our road lay through fields, the soil being moist, and rendered white here and there by heaps of half-thawed snow. The sky was perfectly cloudless, but there was a cutting north-west wind blowing in our faces, that anything but delighted us.

"I begin to wish we had stayed indoors," said our editor presently, turning to me a visage whose nasal organ was of a rich purple hue, no doubt matched in colour by my own.

"Look to your right!" cried Sullivan at that minute; and gazing in the direction he indicated, I saw on the top of a tree a great quantity of those little birds called friars by the Canadians (*Ompellis cedrorum*)—there seemed to be thousands of them.

I fired both barrels of my gun, one after the other, and had the satisfaction of seeing a lot of them fall. Their name is given them in consequence of the resemblance their tuft of feathers bears to the cowl of a monk.

Sullivan and I were picking them up, when a shout from the editor and a report made us turn, to see some animal limping off at a pretty good rate.

"It is a moose!" cried Bob.

My gun was not loaded, and the prey was escaping—the animal of all others I desired to take.

"Let us run!" I shouted, hurriedly reloading. "He is wounded."

And, scarcely hearing my companion's "Do as you like—I shall stop here," I started off at the top of my speed in pursuit. I followed the animal a little distance, when its pace slackened, and it stopped, and looked round. I stopped too, and fired; my foot slipped, I felt a sensation of falling, and knew no more.

When I again opened my eyes, Sullivan was anxiously bending over me.

"Ah! that's better," he said. "He's coming round."

"Where am I? What has happened?"

"Drink a little brandy—that's right. What has happened? Why, you have had a nasty fall, old man, and given us a bit of a scare. But you'll do now—you're beginning to look more natural."

I attempted to sit up, but was glad to lie down again, being bruised all over, and not feeling sure that no bones were broken. The room where we were was strange to me, the only familiar objects being the editor of the *M. P.* and Joe Jenkins—the latter engaged in drawing his handkerchief first through one hand and then through the other in a rapid and excited manner, his eyes the while fixed on my face.

"Will you or will you not tell me where we are?" I said, savagely; for to find oneself lying on a bed, with one's body a mass of bruises, does not tend to improve the temper.

"Oh, he's all right, or nearly so," said Markham, laughing. "We are at an inn near the Falls, where we carried you after your accident."

"What accident?"

"Before I inform you on that point," said Bob, "I should like to know what the damage is. Can you

move your arms?—yes; legs?—yes. Come, I don't think there is anything broken this time," he concluded, as I sat up, and proceeded to feel myself all over, without discovering anything worse than the assurance that I should exhibit a charming variety of tints of purple, blue, and green during the next few days.

"And now, Bob, how did I come into this condition? I remember firing, and that is all."

"Jack Harvey," said he, in a tone unusually grave for his lips, "I should think you have never been nearer closing your career. You gave us all a dreadful fright. You know the ground slopes very rapidly and unbrokenly down to the river, and that part where you stopped to fire is, perhaps, one of the steepest places. Your foot slipped, and we saw you fall, and roll over and over down the incline to the water. The Montmorency flows very fast just here, and we were a very little way above the Falls. If you had not been stopped in time, nothing could have prevented you from being carried over, and the fall is to the depth of three hundred feet. Have a little more brandy—you look pale. It was a close shave; but, thank Heaven, a tree which had fallen across the water kept you long enough for us to get to you and pull you out."

I shuddered, for the picture was anything but pleasant; and inwardly echoed my friend's "Thank Heaven!" for my providential escape.

"And what of that brute of a moose that was the cause of all this?"

"He is up in the corner here," said Markham, "and a fine fellow he is too. But I say, Harvey, don't get up to this sort of thing any more—it's bad for the nerves; and there's Sullivan got wet through in fishing you out, and wouldn't go and put on dry things, because he was in such a fidget about you. Do you know, you've been lying here nearly two hours?"

Sullivan declared he was nearly dry now, for the room was very warm, but consented to go and make an exchange. Any other man would, I believe, have taken his death of cold; but his was a constitution that resisted anything, and he was none the worse for the wetting.

In spite of this adventure, which was so near having a fatal termination, we enjoyed our supper, and a good glass of wine restored our spirits. We slept at the inn, returning to Quebec on the morrow evening; and the next morning we were again on board the *Phyllis*, and continuing our course down the St. Lawrence. Captain Higgins roared with laughter when we related to him the adventure, from which I still suffered a good deal, not being able for my part to see the ludicrous side of the affair, which struck him so forcibly.

A strong wind blowing from the north-west combined with other causes to render the wisdom of our departure questionable. Our pilot had strongly advised remaining in harbour till the weather should be more in our favour; but the captain would not listen, as the collision had already delayed him a day or two, and he was anxious to make up for lost time. We met a great many icebergs, larger than any I had before seen.

We all went to bed soon after supper on the first

night after our return on board, and tried to sleep; but the circumstances did not contribute to the closing of one's eyes in slumber. The ship rolled terribly, and the wind howled mournfully in the rigging. For some time I lay painfully awake to all the various sounds of the gale, which was getting up fast; but at last I was partially losing consciousness, and running over steep inclines after ermine, that always eluded my grasp just as I reached them, with the noise of the wind and waves present with me through all, when a sudden shock mad me leap from my berth and scramble into my clothes, with the conviction upon me that we had struck on a rock.

When I reached the deck, everything was in confusion. The night was dark as pitch, and one could scarcely make one's voice heard amidst the deafening roar of wind and waves. The *Phyllis*, however, had ceased to leap over the billows; she remained motionless, stuck between two rocks. The boats were lowered, and, in a momentary lull, I distinguished the captain's voice yelling the most furious oaths, before it was drowned again in the tumult of the elements. What followed seems like a dream, and I can give no clear account of it. We all reached the northern shore of the river, however, on the next day; and as we found that the *Phyllis* could not be floated again in less than a week, I determined to go on northward on foot and seek my ermine. More than once I felt disposed to give it up altogether, and should have done so but for the thought that I had gone through so much in my quest that it seemed a pity that it should be all for nothing.

The others having no definite plans of their own, we all went on in company as before. We directed our steps towards Lake St. John; for there, I had been told, I should certainly find the animal I sought.

The weather was gloomy and very cold, and did not tend to raise the drooping spirits of our party. The expedition was a failure, without doubt, and, but for my determination not to give up my ermine-skins now that we had come so far, we should have made the best of our way back to Montreal. I shall never forget that day's walk over the half-frozen snow; we never sighted game of any kind, and a drizzling sleet fell unceasingly, wetting us through. Poor Bob Sullivan tramped on stolidly, saying nothing, save when his foot slipped or he trod in some treacherous hole, and then a muttered "The devil!" came to my ears; Joe's handkerchief, even, could not console him for the miserable state of affairs, and he wore an expression of the deepest dejection; the editor looked like he might have done at the death of the *Montreal Planet*. As for me, I felt that I was the cause of all the present discomfort, and tried my best to keep up a conversation, which I found impossible, as I could elicit from either of my companions only monosyllabic replies.

We trudged on, hoping to reach the next village before nightfall; but the rain increased, darkness came on, and we were obliged to take shelter in a deserted loghouse. All that could be said for this building was that it kept the rain out, but we had no means of making a fire, and our pipes were our only consolation. We had no provisions of any kind, and for the first time probably in our lives we

knew what it was to be hungry. During those long wretched hours, before daylight showed our grim countenances, I relinquished my last hope of obtaining the material for Milly's ermine muff, and gave my mind to the sole idea of getting back. I communicated this to the others, who merely growled; for starvation makes men confoundedly disagreeable, I, for my own part, being disposed to wish I possessed Captain Higgins's extensive vocabulary of bad words, that I might have relieved my feelings as he was in the habit of doing.

Starting as soon as it was light, we continued our way northward, thinking that we must soon reach the village of St. Peter, where we should be able to obtain something to eat; for if we had turned back towards Quebec it must have been nearly night before we could get there, and we did not relish the prospect of starving for all those hours. However, we had to do so after all, as we wandered out of our way; and darkness was again overtaking us when the welcome sight of human habitations hastened our lagging footsteps.

Some days afterwards we returned to Quebec, sadder and wiser men than when we left there. As we neared the town, Sullivan came to a standstill, and made a sign to us to be silent. Looking round for the cause, I saw at a short distance four large so-called ermine; for they were really a kind of marten. All those miles, all those hours of cold and hunger, while here was what I sought, which might, perhaps, have been obtained for a five minutes' walk!

We obtained all four, and after we returned to Montreal I had a muff made of them, which I carefully packed ready to send by the next mail. The package was left in the office of the *M. P.*, with some other things that were to be sent off, and satisfied at last that my promise was performed, and the ermine muff would, ere many weeks were over, be in the hands of her for whom it was intended, I dined with Bob Sullivan, having a long chat with him on the subject of our adventures. It was nearly midnight when, as I was returning to my lodgings, a distant cry of "Fire" arrested my attention, and I hurried off to where a glow in the sky indicated the place of the conflagration. Horror of horrors! It was the office of the *Montreal Planet*, which was burned to the ground, nothing being saved from the devouring element.

The editor came tearing up before long, in the direst consternation. As he stood by my side looking at the blazing ruins, I gave vent to a groan.

"There goes my ermine muff!"

"Confound your ermine muff!" he said, savagely; at which I could not feel surprised, for I could not expect him ever to feel any pleasurable associations with those words—least of all at a time like the present.

I returned to England before the next autumn, so Milly never had her present from Canada after all. Her natal day occurred soon after my return, and I looked in the windows in Regent-street for something to send her. It was some time before I discovered anything suitable; but at last I saw the very thing, and purchased it. It was a real Russian ermine muff.

Still Hunting.

BY A CONSTABULARY OFFICER.

MY first station, when I joined the Irish Constabulary, some thirty years ago, was a wild village on the north-western coast. A romantic spot it was, sheltered from the rude Atlantic blast by a range of sand hills, and shut in from the outer world by a semicircle of lofty, irregular mountains. The village was bounded on the south-east, south, and south-west by this mountain chain; while all away to the northward stretched the Atlantic, partly hemmed in on the eastern side by the wild Donegal coast.

Amid these mountains there was many a still-house and many an ingeniously-constructed hide for malt; and amidst their recesses I spent many a long day, and made many a seizure, the particulars of some of which I may give hereafter. On the present occasion, however, I propose to describe a visit to the Island of Ennismurphy, which was the very heart and stronghold of potheen-making in those times.

From a glance at the map it will be seen that this island lies off the Sligo coast, in Donegal Bay, a distance of some six miles or thereabouts from the mainland. The remains which exist on it of the ancient monastery of St. Mulaysius are well known to antiquarians, and the curious manners and customs of its fifty inhabitants have been often and well described before. It was not, however, the scientific research of the antiquary, nor the simpler curiosity of the mere tourist, that attracted the constabulary to its shores: it was the fact that the island was, during the winter months, the depository of the whiskey-making materials of the greater portion of the population of Donegal and Sligo; and for this purpose it was peculiarly well adapted by its position and physical formation.

Protected on all sides by a rocky and iron-bound coast, the smallest swell was sufficient, because the surf formed an impassable barrier to the coastguard boat, which we invariably made use of in our expeditions; while, on the other hand, the inhabitants themselves were able, from their superior activity, constant practice, and the ample assistance of their neighbours, to either launch or beach a boat with safety in almost any sea. It became, therefore, between the stillers and the police, merely a question of a calm or a rough ocean whether any given quantity of wort would be run off into whiskey in safety. We on shore knew that from the month of November to the following month of March there was always illicit material in process of working on the island; and we consequently kept a close watch on the shores, and snatched every favourable opportunity to make a raid on the enemies' coast. These opportunities, however, were generally few and far between. Months sometimes would pass by without a day occurring which favoured our descent upon the island, and we had the satisfaction of seeing with our glasses from the mainland the curling smoke of the still-houses, which we could not hope to interfere with. Occasionally, indeed, we pounced on a

keg or two landed from the island; but the stillers had established such a thoroughly efficient system of spies and signals that it was a very rare occurrence indeed to catch them landing a run of potheen. Our best hope was a sudden frost; and during the winter we, in conjunction with the coastguards, whose station was on a headland commanding a good view of the sea, kept always ready for a sudden start to the island when the thermometer fell below freezing point, and the well-known signs indicated calm, hard weather.

One winter we had been peculiarly unfortunate in our efforts to reach the island. The weather persistently maintained a forbidding aspect. The stillers were having it all their own way; and day after day had I walked to the coastguard station, to gaze on the waves; and, evening after evening, had returned disconsolate, as the weather showed no sign of settling. At last came an afternoon when the wind, veering round to the north-east, fell gradually to a calm. The indicator of the barometer, which had seemed glued to its point of despondency, gradually rose to a most cheerful height; the air became keen and cutting, and hope whispered a flattering tale that frost was at hand. Down I hurried to the coastguard station, where old Bluebags, the chief boatman, was, as usual, leaning against the flagstaff and smoking his clay.

"Well, Bluebags," cried I, "what do you think of the weather? Any chance of the island to-night?"

The old salt took the pipe from his mouth, drew the back of his hand across his lips, and took a comprehensive view of the sea and sky before he replied—

"I think it'll do, sir. We'll get the galley down as far as we can, and if you are here at midnight, with the blessing of Saint Pether we'll thry it anyhow."

I returned to my station and made all preparations for our expedition.

It turned out a fine frosty night, and, as we left our barracks, the clock just striking twelve, we found the heavens a vast canopy of sparkling stars, and the earth hard and crisp to our feet, with a thin glazing of ice already formed over the wayside pools.

The noise of our approach was a sufficient signal to the watchful coastguards, who turned out as we came up, and, all together, we made for the boat-house, out of which we quickly launched the galley, which was already brought by the coastguards nearly to the beach, and was ready for sea. Four stout rowers soon brought us to the island shore, and, with the utmost caution, we drew in under an overhanging rock. It was still, of course, night; but the stars shone brightly, and gave us sufficient light to see our way over the slippery weed. I thought it prudent to send one man ahead to reconnoitre the land, and to bring us back word if anything was going on; and in accordance with my order a constable, slipping cautiously out of the boat, disappeared in the darkness.

In deep silence we waited his return, the only sound that broke the stillness being the gentle wash of the waves as they surged round the boat, and broke in a slight surf on a shingly beach far in at

the extreme end of the inlet. Half an hour elapsed, and I was beginning to grow both impatient and anxious, when our scout once more appeared, crawling on hands and knees over the slippery rocks.

"Well," whispered I, "anything up?"

"The devil a lie in it, but they're at it hard and fast," replied my constable, a Connaught man, and possessed of the true Roscommon brogue. "'Tis over behind the school-house they have the still. I see the fire; and there's a lot of the blackguards there working away like blazes to get the run over before day."

I made my arrangements as rapidly as possible with old Bluebags. I directed him, with his party of coastguards, to take the boat silently round to a point opposite to that where we were. There I directed him to land, and, spreading out his men, to cautiously advance towards the still, I myself landing with my party, and advancing in the same manner on this side. Then, when the stillers were, as I judged, well surrounded, I was to whistle, and a general rush in was, I fondly hoped, to culminate in the arrest of the entire party, caught in the very act. It was by no means a cheerful occupation on a bitter frosty night, crawling on hands and knees over wet seaweed, with an occasional involuntary plunge into shallow pools of sea water; but the excitement of the surprise we anticipated prevented any great feeling of discomfort. We succeeded in getting to within fifty yards of the still-house without giving the alarm; and here it was necessary to wait a given time to allow the coastguards to get into position on the other side. Crouched behind a low wall, wet, cold, and miserable, the scene which I contemplated was sufficiently exhilarating to keep the blood from completely stagnating in my veins.

The spot chosen for the still was close to the ruins of the outer wall of the ancient monastery, and this site was probably selected from its propinquity to a deep well of spring water, which had, in ages past, supplied the needs of the pious monks. Built against a piece of masonry, which may at one time have formed a portion of a sacred edifice, was a glowing fire of turf, over which boiled the immense still, covered with its head, the protruding pipe of which assumed most grotesque shapes in the firelight, till it was lost in the barrel of water which held the worm, the end of which, protruding from the bottom of the cask, dropped the whiskey, which I guessed to be doublings from the occasional testing of its quality by the stillers.

These latter consisted of a party of five, three men, a woman, and a boy. The men were evidently the worse for the liquor they had imbibed, and did little else than occasionally take a fresh draw; the woman and the boy attended to the fire, regulated the worm, and did all the work necessary to the "run."

They were a weird-looking party, their faces grimy with the turf smoke, their expression wild from the liquor they had been drinking, and the effect was intensified by the fitful glare of the fire, now and then showing the frowning ruin of the old monastery standing sentinel over the unlawful orgie. The time came when I judged it right to give the signal. Whistling shrilly, I sprang over the wall and dashed

for the still. Quick as I was, however, the stillers were not to be taken so easily. My whistle was hardly from my lips, when, like magic, the entire party disappeared in different directions, and I had the mortification of seeing the whole five decamp before I reached the spot where they stood. I was quickly surrounded by my men, however, and I was gratified to see in their clutches two of the stillers; the rest had escaped, and we knew well we were done with them, as in the darkness of the night pursuit would have been utterly hopeless.

We quickly dismantled the still, and, as it was within half an hour of dawn, I made a regular bivouac by the fire, posted a sentinel, and, lighting my pipe, I wrapped my great coat round me, and crouched over the embers trying to warm up my frozen limbs.

Daylight came at last, and, with the dawn, the news of our capture spread amongst the islanders. A crowd collected rapidly on the shore near our boat, and I began to fear an attempt might be made to rescue our prisoners.

Destroying, therefore, all of the seizure that was inconvenient to carry with us, I collected my forces, and handcuffing the wretched captives, I marched them to the landing place, amidst groans and plenty of abuse in Irish from the natives. I had, however, no intention of departing without a further search of the island. We knew very well that there were stores of malt and wort to be had for the seeking, and, accordingly, I left the prisoners in the boat with a guard of four men, and, with the rest of my party, I proceeded to make a close examination of the neighbourhood. For some hours our quest was unsuccessful: at last, however, a loud whistle proclaimed a discovery. I ran to the place, and found my constable probing, with the ramrod of his carbine, at a little hole in the shingle of the seashore.

"Well, MacDermott, what have you got there?" cried I, as I came up.

"Faith, I'm not right sure, sir," replied the constable; "I think 'tis a malt-house, but maybe 'tis only a cask it is, after all."

The rest of the men coming up, we were soon all busy rooting away the stones, and presently we exposed to view a large flat slab, cemented round its edges with a kind of blue clay, which seemed to make an excellent substitute for mortar. With a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together, we removed the slab, and exposed to view a narrow hole, just large enough to admit a man's body. Obeying the instinct of my curiosity, I first pushed into the passage, and, with a little squeezing, I found myself in a regular underground chamber, high enough to enable me to stand upright, and measuring about thirty feet long by twelve broad. This chamber was entirely constructed of drift timber, many a square block of good Canada pine, and many a spar from ill-fated wrecks, had been used to prop up its sides, and to cover in its roof, before the thick coating of shingle and sea-sand was placed over all. I struck a light, and, being joined by my party, we searched the place, and seized a goodly store of malt in process, which I had conveyed to the surface, and thrown into the sea.

It was now mid-day, and I gave the order to pre-

pare for home. We reached the little cove where we had left the boat, and here a curious scene met our eyes. A crowd of some twenty women, all the available female population of the island, had assembled on the shore, and with threatening gestures were assailing the party in the boat with every species of vituperation in Irish.

The two prisoners were sitting in the stern in sullen silence. For better security they had been handcuffed, and the boat had been pushed off a few yards to prevent the women from boarding and carrying off their friends by main force.

As I approached, a perfect storm of execration greeted me. One of the women caught up a stone, and flung it in our direction. This was the signal for a general attack.

A volley of missiles was discharged at us. A threatening squad of male natives began to gather in our rear. We were in an awkward position, and I saw nothing for it but a bold dash at the women. I drew my men together, and, with drawn swords, we charged the crowd. A general scrimmage took place, the women fought like demons, and we at length made our way to the boat, with several cut heads and scratched faces as a memento of our morning's duty. As we rowed away in all haste, the women knelt down on the rocks, and, with uplifted hands, uttered the most fearful anathemas on our devoted heads. There was something awful in their wild aspect, and I saw many of our hardy crew shiver and turn pale as their denunciations reached our ears. Though pretty well accustomed to such scenes, I confess it was with a feeling of relief I once more jumped on to *terra firma* when we reached the mainland, and so successfully accomplished our raid on Ennismurphy.

No Fun in Him.

ONE of the members of the Methodist conference recently held in Detroit, Mich., was out for a walk at an early hour one morning, and while on Howard-street he encountered a strapping big fellow who was drawing a waggon to the blacksmith's shop.

"Catch hold here and help me down to the shop with this waggon, and I'll buy the whiskey," called the fellow.

"I never drink," solemnly replied the good man.

"Well, you can take a cigar."

"I never smoke."

The man dropped the waggon-tongue, looked hard at the member, and asked—

"Don't you chew?"

"No, sir," was the decided reply.

"You must get mighty lonesome," mused the teamster.

"I guess I'm all right; I feel first-rate."

"I'll bet you even that I can lay you on your back," remarked the teamster. "Come now, let's warm up a little."

"I never bet."

"Well, let's take each other down for fun, then. You are as big as I am, and I'll give you the under hold."

"I never have any fun," solemnly answered the member.

"Well, I am going to tackle you, anyway. Here we go."

The teamster slid up and endeavoured to get a neck-hold; but he had only just commenced to fool about, when he was lifted clear off the grass and slammed against a tree-box with such force that he gasped half a dozen times before he could get his breath.

"Now, you keep away from me!" exclaimed the minister, picking up his cane.

"Rat me if I don't," replied the teamster, as he edged off. "What's the use in lying, and saying you didn't have any fun in you, when you're chock full of it? Blame it! you wanted to break my neck, didn't you? You just hang around here about five minutes, you old Texan, and I'll bring a feller who'll cave in your head."

"I never hang," said the minister, as he sauntered off.

And the teamster leaned upon his waggon and mused.—*American Paper.*

AN old fisherman says—"We look upon the otter as more our friend than otherwise. The otter in early spring feeds more or less upon frogs, and as the season advances then upon eels. The greatest enemy fish have is the eel, from the quantity of spawn it destroys. The otter kills his thousands, but the eel his tens of thousands. The otter kills the old trout, and what is more destructive to trout than the trout himself? My belief is that one old trout destroys more fish in one season than six otters, though not in weight, but in numbers. The otter does but little harm."

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